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TRACES

OF THE

ELDER FAITHS OF IRELAND

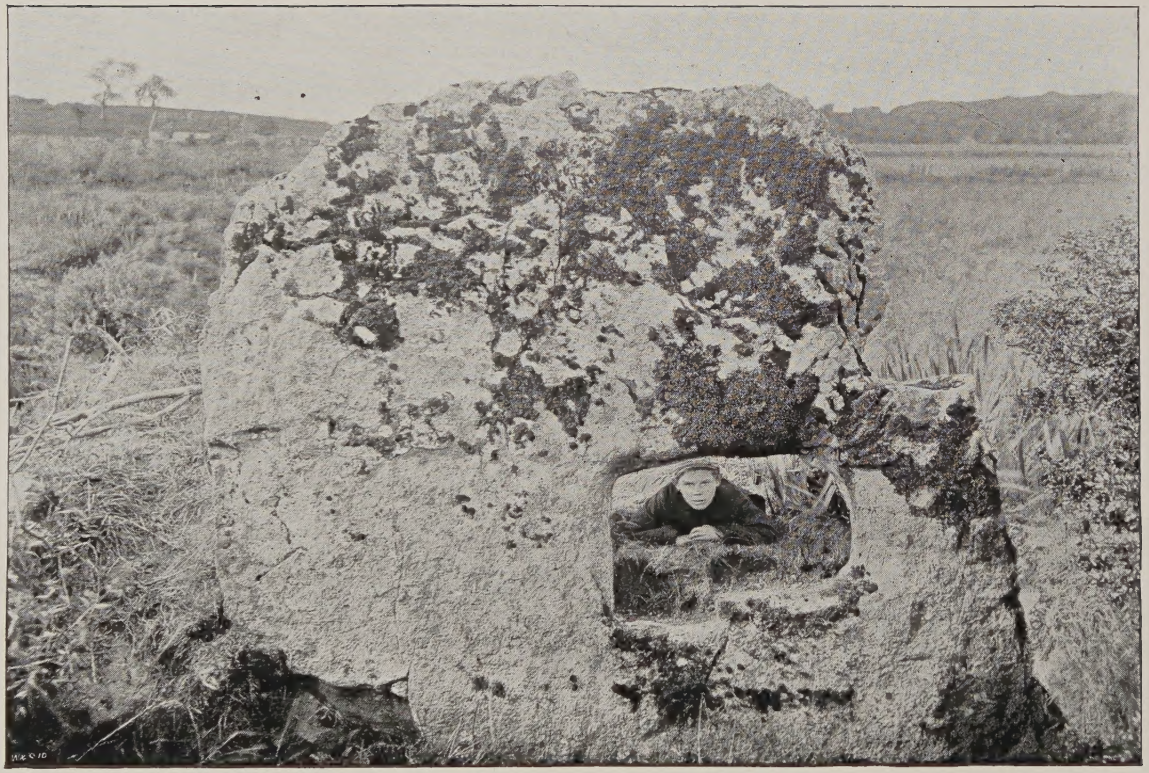
'If any there be which are desirous to be strangers in their owne soile, and forrainers in their owne Citie, they may so continue, and therein flatter themselves. For such like I have not written these lines nor taken these paines.'—CAMDEN.

'TURPE EST IN PATRIÂ PEREGRINARI, ET IN EIS REBUS QUÆ AD PATRIAM PERTINENT HOSPITEM ESSE.'

'IN NOVA FERT ANIMUS MUTATAS DICERE FORMAS
CORPORA.'

'THOUGH KNEELING NATIONS WATCH AND YEARN,
DOES THE PRIMORDIAL PURPOSE TURN?'

'ONE ETERNAL AND IMMUTABLE LAW EMBRACES ALL THINGS AND ALL TIMES.'



"HOLED STONE" AT TOBERNAVEAN, WOODVILLE, NEAR SLIGO.
CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM INFANT MALADIES WERE FORMERLY PASSED THROUTH THE APERTURE FOR A CURE.
From Welch's Irish Views.

TRACES

OF THE

ELDER FAITHS OF IRELAND

A FOLKLORE SKETCH

A Handbook of Irish Pre-Christian Traditions

BY

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&c., &c.

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To the Memory of

My Mother

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ERRATA.

Page 26, line 2, *for* "Senanus" *read* "Senan".
,, 27, ,, 23, *for* "us" *read* "it".
,, 90, ,, 31, *for* "Fachnan" *read* "Fachtnan".
,, 125, ,, 16, *for* "kittling" *read* "kitling".
,, 212, ,, 12, *for* "scafolding" *read* "scaffolding".
,, 225, ,, 18, *for* "Form" *read* "From".
,, 320, lines 4 and 13, *for* "Yates," *read* "Yeats".

Omission from Bibliography.

731a Borlace, W. C.:

Dolmens of Ireland, with their Legends and Folklore. London, 1897.

TRACES OF THE ELDER FAITHS OF IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

FAIRY LORE.

The Present the outcome of the Past—In the savage mind no distinction drawn between Good and Bad Spirits—Great advance made when they become divided into two classes—The Key to the Religion of Savages is Fear—Fear of the Living preserves the social framework, Fear of the Unseen the religious framework of society—The Fairies—The "Grogan" of Ulster—Emigration of the Fairies from Ireland—Fairies invisible in daylight—Observant, nevertheless, of everything that takes place—Ill-omened to speak of them—Partake of a mixed Human and Spirit Nature—Libations and Sacrifices made to them—Fairy Cavalcades—Fairy Hunting Parties—Fairy Malice—Fairy Visitors—Iron employed as a Charm against their influence—Fairy Assaults—Fairies abduct young matrons, girls, and infants—Fairy Changelings—Fairy Revels—Fairy Music—Fairy Battles—Fairy Mounds—Rewards offered for their capture—The Leprechaun, or Hermit Fairy—The Dullaghan, or Headless Spectre—Spirits cannot cross a stream of running water—Animals announce the presence of Spirits by showing signs of great terror—Will-o'-the-wisp and his pranks.

The interest of this branch of archæological study arises from recognition of the fact that the present is the outcome of the past, and that an adequate apprehension of the past is necessary to the understanding of human life under present conditions. The main cause of the great interest of the past is owing to the fact that it is easier to trace the actions of human principles and instincts at a time when the conditions of life were less complex than they now are. Having once obtained a knowledge of these instances, in their simpler action, they form a valuable clue to the understanding of human actions, even in the complicated circumstances of modern life. Although we speak of distinct ages, there is in truth no real distinction, no line of fixed

demarcation, for the older period glides into the next as imperceptibly as an old year is followed by the new.

In the earlier stages of human civilization, no distinction is made, in the savage mind, between supernatural beings, who have never been "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" within a mould of clay, and the spirits of the dead. The line of demarcation which now separates fairies, and similar emanations of the human mind, from the souls of men, has been the gradual outcome of Christian teaching, for the philosophy of savages mingles them together; indeed it seems entirely foreign to the mind of primitive man to conceive the idea of a beneficent spirit. The characters they ascribe to spirits are unconscious reflections of their own natures; the spirits of their creation use the same artifices, and have to be overcome by the same means, as would be employed in earthly contests.

The keystone of this description of religion is fear—fear of the unknown. This feeling was probably the moving principle underlying the worship of the ancient Irish. From his appearance into this world until his exit from it, one of these old heathens was probably as completely enslaved by his superstitions as is, by his "medicine man," an American Indian, who in sickness or in health, in peace or in war, looks for guidance and counsel to an arrant impostor, who combines in himself the functions of priest, prophet, and physician.

At this stage of superstitious bondage we cannot afford to laugh, unless, indeed, we can afford to laugh at ourselves also; for the frenzy of the medicine man, the ecstasy of the saint, and the mad pranks of the revivalist have a common origin, either in self-deception, an undisciplined imagination, or a combination of both.

The only supernatural beings, or spirits, the primitive savage believed in, or feared, were the dead who had belonged to his own tribe. About these he had no definite belief, but only an all-prevailing dread. The spirits of the dead of another tribe would of course be considered inimical. So late as the sixteenth century, the Buccaneers, when hiding their spoil, killed a slave or a Spaniard—that is a stranger or an enemy—and buried the corpse over the hidden booty, believing that the ghost of the slain would haunt the spot and frighten away treasure-seekers. They

> ". . . . . kill some slave
> Or prisoner on the treasure grave,
> And bid his discontented ghost
> Stalk nightly on his lonely post."

With the savage there was no great distinction between good and bad spirits. These probably varied in proportion to the

characters borne by them when in the flesh. It is therefore a great advance when spirits are divided into two classes, the good and the malignant; a still greater advance is made when they further develop into beings of an altogether superhuman character, who may be described as gods or demons. On the other hand, in modern times, the alleged apparitions of ghosts or spirits, may be generally resolved into two categories—those produced by religious fraud, or gross imposture, and those which are the product of the imagination, and occasioned by anxiety of mind, overwork of the brain, or a disordered stomach.

It has been remarked that fear of the living preserves the social framework, fear of the unseen preserves the religious framework of society. The fear betrayed by a child when alone in the dark, and the fear with which an uneducated person passes through a churchyard by night, demonstrate the still continued sentiment which seems to have been the principal element of most primitive religions. In the present day, many who deny, with their tongue, the existence of spirits, yet confess, by their fears, their belief in their presence. The savage worships the being that, to his mind, conveys an idea of fear or dread; but the custom of worshipping that which contributes to his wants and necessities, is also occasionally met with amongst uncivilized, as also amongst semi-civilized races. In India, a woman adores the basket which carries necessaries, and offers sacrifices to it, as well as to the rice mill and the other implements which mitigate household labour; a carpenter pays homage to his tools, and offers sacrifice to them; a Brahmin does the same to the style with which he is going to write; a soldier to the arms he is to use in the field; a mason to his trowel; and a ploughman to his plough.

Professor O'Curry, in his *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History*, gravely divides fairies into two distinct classes, *i.e.* the *bonâ fide* fairies or demons and the magic race of the Dedanann, who, after being conquered by the Milesians, transformed themselves into fairies.

In the north of Ireland, fairies appear to have been of larger stature and more uncouth than elsewhere; there the fairy called "Grogan" is low of stature, hairy, with broad shoulders, and very strong: or, in popular parlance, "unco wee bodies," but "terrible strang." In Ulster, also, the peasantry, on a day of mingled rain and sunshine, sometimes say, "The good people are baking to-day"; alluding to the unlimited supply of water for the purpose of moistening the flour and of the sun-heat for baking the fairy dough. The fairies are not as numerous as formerly. An Ulsterman asked why they were not seen now-a-days, thought for a little while and then replied:—"There's

them that says the wee folk's gone to Scotland, but they're wrang. This country's full o' them only there's so much scripture spread abroad that they canna get making themselves visible." On the night of the 5th January, the Feast of St. Ceara, the fairies used to hold high revel throughout the length and breadth of Erin. Their last great assembly was in the year 1839, when violent disputes arose among prominent fairy leaders, and the night following a large portion of the fairy host quitted the Green Isle, never to return. The hurricane they raised in their flight was long referred to by the peasantry as the "Night of the Big Wind." A correspondent living in the north of Ireland states that he obtained various accounts of appearances of the "wee people" from an old man who, in his youth, had direct experience himself. He was loath to enlarge on the subject to a person who would probably, he considered, make light of it, but he nevertheless adhered to his assertions, that when he was a lad, he and his companions who were playing around a holy well one summer's evening, were greatly terrified by the sudden appearance of a "company of wee people in scarlet," and that he and his comrades ran away as fast as they could.

It should be always borne in mind that, though the fairies are generally invisible in daylight, they are observant of all that takes place, especially of anything that seems to concern themselves. It is extremely inadvisable to mention them by name; for instance, Dame Glendinning, in Scott's novel of *The Monastery*, when reciting the precautions she had taken against fairy influence, concluded thus:—"And I wish to know of your reverence if there be ony thing mair that a lone woman can do in the matter of ghosts and fairies? Be here! that I should have named their unlucky names twice ower!"

A similar desire to propitiate beings of malignant nature, or a wish to avoid words of ill omen, characterises people of very high civilization. The Mahommedan thinks that God's real name is known only to his prophets, Allah being merely his human title, just as the Jews held that Javah had an uncommunicable name, and old Jewish legends recount how Solomon, commencing only to utter it, made heaven and earth tremble. The Greeks denominated "the furies," "the benevolent"; the "Cape of Storms" has been metamorphosed, by the generally reputed prosaic Saxon, into the "Cape of Good Hope." Sir Walter Scott describes how the highlanders called the gallows, on which so many of their friends and relations lost their lives, the "kind" gallows, and addressed it with uncovered head, the ceremony being evidently of a propitiatory character. The antithesis of this is shown even now-a-days amongst sailors who

are imbued with a superstitious feeling regarding the ill-luck attendant on a ship which bears what is considered an auspicious or lucky name. In many localities weasels, or more properly stoats, are greatly dreaded by the peasantry. They are supposed to steal milk from cows, to spit fire, and to be endowed with power to injure both man and beast. Yet here again the idea of propitiating malign influence is apparent, for on seeing a stoat a countryman will raise his hat and address it in Irish as "pretty lady"; for what a man dreads, but feels he is powerless to control, that he seeks to appease.

The fairies are thought to partake of a mixed human and spirit-nature. These curious creations of the fancy have been thus described :—

> "That which is neither ill nor well;
> That which belongs not to Heaven or Hell,
> A wreath of the mist, a bubble of the stream,
> 'Twixt a waking thought and a sleeping dream.
> A form that men spy
> With the half shut eye,
> In the beam of the setting sun am I."

The peasantry have apparently tried to reconcile heathen and Christian imagination, and hold an ill-defined belief that fairies are fallen spirits, driven from heaven, and condemned to dwell on earth until the day of judgment. The legend runs that at the time of Satan's rebellion some angels remained true to their allegiance, others sided with Lucifer, whilst a third party remained neutral. At the termination of the struggle those who sided with the Almighty remained in heaven, those who fought against Him were cast into the nether regions; but those who remained neutral, unfitted for either heaven or hell, were compelled to dwell in rocks and hills, lakes and seas, bushes and forests, where they must remain until the day of judgment, and it is a moot point amongst rural theologians as to whether, even then, they have a remote chanceof salvation.

They themselves are said to entertain, like many mortals, grave doubts regarding their future, although they have undefined hopes of being restored to happiness; hence their enmity towards mankind, whom they acknowledge to be certain of living eternally in a future state. Thus the actions of the fairies are balanced by an intermixture of good and evil, and their passions are often as vindictive as their inclinations are generous and humane. Finvarra, a great fairy chief, once asked St. Columbkille if there were any hope that the fairies would gain heaven, but the saint answered that hope there was none, their doom was fixed, and at the great judgment day they would not merely

die but would suffer annihilation. There is a great similarity in the imagery concerning these imaginary beings among nations that, for a lengthened period, have had but little intercourse. The following story occurs in Danish popular folklore:—A priest, one night, happened to pass a hill in which music, dancing, and other merry making were going on. Some fairies issued suddenly from the hill, stopped the carriage, and asked the priest whether he thought they would be saved in the last day. He replied that he did not know, but that he would give them an answer that day twelvemonth. The priest kept his promise and returned at the appointed time, when the fairies repeated the question to which he answered, "No, you will all be damned." Upon this the entire hill became suddenly enveloped in bright flames.

On May eve the peasantry used to drive all their cattle into old raths, or forts, thought to be much frequented by the fairies, bleed them, taste the blood, and pour the remainder on the earth. Men and women were also bled, and their blood sprinkled on the ground; but this practice has, it is believed, now died out, though sacrifice through blood, or the taking away of life, is still considered sacred and beneficial. When seeking for buried treasure, it is well to immolate a black cock or a black cat—a similar sacrifice is deemed necessary before the commencement of any important operation—it is also certain to remove ill-luck from a house.

A correspondent states that there is a tradition of long standing, that at the roots of a certain tree, on a farm, in the north of Ireland, lay a pot of gold. Some labourers thought they would dig for it, but as soon as they began work a "wee red man" appeared and told them they need not proceed unless they first sacrificed a life, but if they did so they would find the gold. The fairy, however, did not say whether the life was to be that of a human being, or that of one of the lower animals. The labourers thereupon sent for permission to kill a dog belonging to the gentleman owning the farm, but he refused and stopped the exploration. This episode is supposed to have happened about the year 1840, and is firmly believed to be true.

When a cow fell sick through fairy malice, it was formerly by no means an uncommon practice, in the west of Ireland, to devote the ailing animal to St. Martin. The ceremony was performed by letting a few drops of blood from the cow in honour of the saint. If it recovered, the animal was never either sold or killed, as it would be dishonouring the saint to suffer it to die any save a natural death.

A libation of some of the thick new milk given by a cow after calving, if poured on the ground, more especially in the

interior of a rath or fort, is supposed to appease the anger of the offended fairies. Before drinking, a peasant will in many cases, spill a small portion of the draught on the earth, as a complimentary libation to the good people. In the present day, the Italian peasant invariably throws the first drop or so of common country wine from the big bottle covered with straw which he uses, ejaculating "Per Bacco." This is a relic of a libation to the rosy god, just as the Irish peasant, in purposely spilling milk or other drink, quite unconsciously sacrifices to the ancient gods of the land.

The same principle of a first oblation is carried out in a cure for heartburn. The sufferer, on consulting an "herb-doctor," is given an egg, with instructions to boil it, chip the shell and throw the first spoonful on the ground, and eat the remainder. This process must be gone through on three successive days, when the charm is complete.

If a child accidentally spills her mug of milk on the ground, the mother says, "That 's for the fairies: leave it to them and welcome." The child should not be reproved, for that would bring ill luck to the household.

In the Rev. George Turner's *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, it is stated that:—"As in ancient Greece so in Samoa, the first cup was in honour of the God. It was either poured out on the ground or waved towards the heaven, reminding us again of the Mosaic ceremonies. The chiefs all drank a portion of the same cup, according to rank." Some of the North American Indians, before commencing smoking, lift the mouthpiece of the pipe heavenward to allow the Great Spirit the first whiff of the fragrant weed.

One should never throw slops out of door or window without calling out, "Take care of the water," for the fairies might be passing, and would resent the drenching and soiling of their gay caps and clothes. Lady Wilde recounts the following anecdote on this subject:—"One dark winter's night a woman suddenly threw out a pail of boiling water without thinking of the warning words. Instantly a cry was heard as of a person in pain, but no one was seen. However, the next night a black lamb entered the house, having the back all fresh scalded, and it lay down moaning by the hearth and died. Then they all knew this was the spirit that had been scalded by the woman. And they carried the dead lamb out reverently and buried it deep in the earth. Yet every night at the same hour it walked again into the house and lay down and moaned and died. And after this had happened many times, the priest was sent for; and finally, by the strength of his exorcism, the spirit of the dead was laid to rest and the black lamb appeared no more."

Harvest-time is remarkable for affording frequent glimpses of fairy cavalcades. On a stormy day, the eddies of dust raised by the wind along the roads are regarded by the peasantry as occasioned by a fairy cavalcade travelling from one rath to another. The same marks of respect are observed towards the invisible horsemen as if the dust had been raised by a company of the most exalted persons ; and some will throw tufts of grass, pieces of sticks, or even small pebbles into the centre of the dust-eddy, not as an insult, but as an offering to appease the good people. The same superstition prevails in the East.

The fairies often go out hunting. In the calm summer evening the faint sound of tiny horns, the baying of hounds, the galloping of horses, the cracking of whips, and the shouts of the hunters may be distinctly heard, whilst their rapid motion through the air occasions a noise resembling the loud humming of bees when swarming from a hive.

Travelling through the air upon rushes, instead of upon borrowed horses, is of common occurrence in fairy history, but a blade of grass, a straw, a fern root, or a cabbage stalk are equally adapted for ærial steeds—these latter articles, *i.e.* fern roots or cabbage stalks—must, however, be cut into a rude similitude of a real horse. Persons afflicted with "falling sickness" are supposed to be merely suffering from fatigue attendant on the lengthened journeys which they are constrained to take, night after night, with the fairies, and mounted on cabbage stumps.

The fairies are objects of a strange, unreasoning, childlike fear, and the amount of mischief ascribed to them, in the imagination of the peasantry, is wonderful, considering the very diminutive stature assigned to them. In the Dublin fragment of "Tighernach's Annals," edited by Whitley Stokes, in vol. xviii. of the *Revue Celtique*, the death of Cormac, grandson of Conn the Hundred Fighter, is gravely alleged to have been occasioned by the malice of the fairies. "Fairies killed him, after he was betrayed by Maelcenn the Wizard, because Cormac had revolted against the Wizard, and worshipped God in lieu of them."

Like Puck the fairies are said to

> "Skim milk, sometimes labour in the quern,
> And bootless make the breathless housewife churn."

This can be prevented, and the butter be made to rise, by nailing a horse-shoe on the bottom of the churn—for an iron horse-shoe, or indeed an iron article of any kind, is looked upon as a potent charm to keep fairies away.

Another remedy is, directly after sunset, to bar every door

and window in the house, light a great fire of turf on the hearth, and place nine irons in the fire, whilst the following charm is recited, in Irish,

> "Come butter, come,
> Come butter, come,
> Peter stands at the gate,
> Waiting for a buttered cake.
> Come butter, come!"

As the irons become heated a great noise will be heard without, and a witch will try to force an entrance, beseeching the occupants of the house to take the irons off the fire, as they are burning her. Finding all attempts at entry useless, the witch, shrieking with agony, will return to her house and bring back all the butter. The irons may then be removed from the fire, her torments will cease, and the farmer will enjoy, in undiminished quantity, the product of his cows. If a neighbour or a stranger enter a cottage, whilst churning is going on, he should put his hand to the dash, as otherwise the butter will not come, or will be abstracted in some mysterious way, so no one, gentle or simple, either from courtesy or in consideration of the farmer's feelings, will omit to share, or appear to share, in the necessary labour. From the Irish Hudibras we also learn that fairies:—

> "Drink dairies dry, and stroke the cattle;
> Steal sucklings, and through the key-holes sling,
> Toping and dancing in a ring."

In any case a careful housewife should always, before retiring to rest, leave a large vessel full of good drinking water in the kitchen. One night a woman was awakened by a great noise, and on entering her kitchen found the fairies in possession, some of them cooking victuals before the fire, whilst others were preparing the food. The good people cautioned her to go back, so she wisely retired again to her bed. The next morning everything in the kitchen appeared undisturbed, except the large vessel used for holding drinking water, which was full of blood, a hint to leave in future plenty of pure spring water for the self-invited guests.

Many years ago, two industrious women, engaged one night in spinning flax, in a cabin in a remote, wild, and mountainous district, were suddenly disturbed by a loud knocking at the door. The affrighted women made no reply, when a shrill voice outside inquired in Irish, "Are you within, Feet-water?" "I am," came the reply from a pot in the corner of the kitchen in which

the family had washed their feet before retiring to bed. A sound of splashing was heard in the water, and an eel-like form rose from the pot, and stretching forward, unbarred the door. Several women of small stature, of extraordinary appearance, and strangely attired, entered, and began to use the spinning-wheel. Under pretence of fetching turf for the fire, one of the inmates walked out of the opened door, but immediately rushed back, exclaiming, "The mountain is on fire."

The unwelcome intruders at once ran out of the house shrieking and exclaiming, "My husband and my children are burnt." On the success of the stratagem, the women of the house lost not a moment in resorting to the usual precautions against fairy influence. They made fast the door with the iron tongs, laid the broom against the door, threw a glowing ember from the hearth into the "feet-water," plucked a quill from the wing of a speckled hen (almost needless to explain that fowls always roost in the cabins), removed the band from the spinning-wheel, placed the carded flax under a weight, and made up the fire. They were scarcely in bed when the mysterious visitors were heard outside calling in Irish as before, "Let me in, Feet-water"; but now the response from the pot was, "No, I cannot, for there is a spark in me." The fairy women then addressed their applications to all the other objects in turn—"Let me in, tongs;" "Let me in, broom"; "Let me in, speckled hen"; "Let me in, wheel-band"; "Let me in carded flax." Each object replied that it was powerless to obey, owing to the precautions which had been taken. The fairies thereupon raised a yell of disappointed fury, and took their departure, with the imprecation, "May your tutor meet her reward."

Here, again, in this story, iron is employed as a charm against fairy-influence and fairy-assaults; but the strange legend also may be instanced as descriptive of the custom of throwing a piece of burning peat into any vessel in which feet have been washed; and to this day the fizzing of an ember in a pot of water is music in the ears of an old crone, from the assurance that the house is thus impregnable to the assaults of the "good people."

Mr. C. J. Hamilton, in *The Spectator* (9th April, 1897), recounts a modified version of the same story as occurring in Connemara:—"The mountain overlooking the beautiful Bay of Killary is called Mweelrea (The Bald King); and it, too, is supposed to be sacred to the fairies, and a fairy's spinning-wheel is somewhere concealed there. One day a woman who lived near was spinning in her cabin, when two old women carrying wheels came in. They began to spin, and their hostess, thinking they would like some refreshment, went out to get water for making tea. One

of her neighbours saw her, and asked her what she was doing. 'Faith, I'm going to give two dacint little women a cup of tea.' 'Shure, they're fairies,' said the other. 'What will I do, at all at all?' 'Tell them Mweelrea is on fire.' So the owner of the cabin went back crying: 'Mweelrea is on fire.' And the two women got up and ran out, leaving their wheels behind them."

A horse-shoe is often to be seen nailed over the door of a dwelling-house, dairy, or stable, or to the mast of a fishing smack. In the first instance, it prevents the fairies from entering the house and doing mischief to the inmates; in the second, it is a certain preventive against their milking the cows, taking the horses out of the stable and riding them over hill and dale the long night through, leaving them to be discovered in the morning trembling in every limb, exhausted and bathed in sweat; in the third instance it is a charm against fairies, who are supposed to be fond of lurking in fishing boats drawn up on the seashore, and delight in hindering fishermen in their toilsome avocation. A small piece of iron should be sewn into an infant's clothes.

Fig. 1.
The Rescue from the Fairies. From Mrs. Hall's *Irish Sketches.*

The fairies are reputed to have been conquered by a race using iron weapons, so they dread that metal, or steel. When the friends of a person who has been carried off by the good people venture into their underground retreat to bring back the captive to upper air, they arm themselves with a missal, or a

prayer-book, and an iron knife. This latter, laid on the threshold of the entrance into the rath, prevents the fairies from pursuing the rescue-party when they have found the prisoner, and are in the act of carrying him off. Another practice adopted by persons who wish to recover a spell-bound friend from a state of durance, is to stand on All Hallows Eve at a cross-roads, or at such spot as may be pointed out by a wise woman or a fairy doctor. Having rubbed a special ointment on the eyelids, the fairies will become visible as the fairy troop sweeps past the spot, and the gazer be enabled to recognise the prisoner by a peculiarity of dress, or by some token. A sudden gust of wind indicates the near approach of the elves; stooping, the watchers gather up the dust from under their feet and throw it at the procession, or throw milk from a vessel they carry for the purpose. The fairies are thereby compelled to surrender any human being in their custody (fig. 1).

The following Irish ballad, with its English translation, by George Roberts, appears in Mangan's collection of *Poets and Poetry of Ireland*. Of the author nothing further is known. The poem is entitled, "The Dark Fairy Rath," and presents a good specimen of the idea entertained by the peasantry regarding the abduction by the fairies of young and good-looking country lassies.

"Long, long have I wandered in search of my love,
O'er moorland and mountain, through greenwood and grove,
From the banks of the Maig unto Finglas's flood
I have ne'er seen the peer of this Child of the Wood.

One bright Summer evening alone on my path,
My steps led me on to the Dark Fairy Rath;
And, seated anear it, my Fair One I found,
With her long golden locks trailing down on the ground.

When I met her, though bashfulness held me in check,
I put my arm gently around her white neck;
But she said, 'Touch me not, and approach me not near;
I belong to this Rath, and the Fairy Host here.'

'Ah!' I spake, 'you are burdened with sorrow and care;
But whence do you come? From Clar Luire or elsewhere?
Are you Blanaid the blooming, the queenly, yet coy,
Or the dame brought by Paris aforetime to Troy?'

'I'm neither,' she said, 'but a meek Irish maid,
Who years ago dwelt in yon green-hillocked glade,
And shone all alone like a lamp in a dome.
Come! take off your arms! I'll be late for my home.'

'O pearl of my soul, I feel sad and forlorn
To see your bright cheeks fairy-stricken and worn.
From your kindred and friends far away were you borne
To the Hill of Cnoc-Greine, to languish and mourn.'

And I said to myself, as I thought on her charms,
O how fondly I'd lock this young lass in my arms.
How I'd love her deep eyes, full of radiance and mirth,
Like new-risen stars that shine down upon earth.

Then I twined round her waist my two arms as a zone,
And I fondly embraced her to make her my own;
But when I glanced up, behold! nought could I see.
She had fled from my sight as the bird from the tree!"

Young mothers are supposed to be carried off to nurse fairy children. According to Shakspeare, the English fairies, at any rate, are provided with a properly-qualified midwife of their own, for in *Romeo and Juliet* the following description of the "Mistress Fairy" occurs:—

"O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fairies' midwife."

Lady Wilde remarks that:—"Until a woman has gone through the ceremony of churching, after the birth of her child, she is the most dangerous being on earth. No one should eat food from her hand, and myriads of demons are always around her trying to do harm, until the priest comes and sprinkles holy water over her. Even if she goes to the river to wash, the fish will all go away from her in tremor and fear; for fishes are a very pious race, and cannot bear to be touched by unholy hands, ever since the mark of Christ's fingers was on them. Indeed, they were once, by accident, auditors of an argument against transubstantiation held by a heretic, and were so shocked at his language that they all left the river, and the disappointed angler could not help regretting that the fish were so very particular as to the tenets of Holy Church."

If a man leaves the house after his wife's confinement, some of his clothes should be spread over the mother and infant, or the fairies will carry them both off; for the fairy queen desires, above all things, a mortal woman as a nurse for her fairy offspring. And if her own child happens to be an ugly little sprite, she will gladly change it for the beautiful human babe, who henceforth will live entirely in fairyland, and never more see his kindred or home.

It is well known that the ministry of well-disposed fairies was peculiarly conversant with the birth of children. The testimony of Milton is express:—

"Good luck befriend thee, son, for at thy birth
The faëry ladies danc'd upon the hearth;
The drowsy nurse has sworn she did them spie,
Come tripping to the room where thou didst lie,
And, sweetly singing round about thy bed,
Strow all their blessings on thy sleeping head."

For a girl to dream she sees a fairy is a sign that she will soon be married. Under any circumstances it is a favourable omen for women to dream of fairies, but it is an unfavourable sign for men, and no man should undertake any important matter for several days after such a dream, or it will surely end in disappointment.

In remote parts of the country it is still believed that the fairies change children in the cradle; therefore, as already stated, a piece of iron should be sewn into the infant's clothes, and kept there until it is baptized; another remedy is to put salt on the cradle; if an infant commences to pine or becomes peevish, it is a sure sign that an exchange has been effected. Detailed narratives of the removal or substitution of a fairy for an earthly child are not uncommon. Spenser, in the *Faërie Queene*, thus describes the incident:—

> ". . . A fairy thee unweeting reft,
> There as thou slept in tender swaddling band,
> And her base elfin brood there for thee left:
> Such, men do changelings call, so changed by Fairies' theft."

Therefore, babies should be carefully watched until they are christened, lest they be carried off or changed; but fairy changelings are easily recognised by their tricky habits, and by constantly complaining and crying for food.

This idea of fairy possession is still quite common:—"Sometimes a sickly invalid is entirely neglected by his or her friends, and if remonstrance is made, the answer is, 'Shure it 's not him (or her as the case may be) at all. It 's only an ould fairy.' Even medicine ordered by the doctors has not been given, on the ground that 'It 'ud be no good; it 's not them is in it.'" A plan, which at once demonstrates the nature of the child, is to place it over the fire, on an iron shovel, when with wild shrieks the fairy vanishes up the chimney, venting all sorts of anathemas on the household that has so treated it; but while waiting for the solution of the enigma, the unfortunate child is often so dreadfully burned that it dies in great agony, its cries being heard with callous indifference by its parents, who imagine that it is the fairy child, not their own offspring, that is tortured.

Crofton Croker quotes Robin Goodfellow's song, in which the proceedings of a fairy troop are thus described:—

> "When larks 'gin sing
> Away we fling
> And babes new born steal as we go,
> An elf in bed
> We leave instead
> And wend us laughing Ho! Ho! Ho!"

The fairy changeling often produces a set of tiny bagpipes, sits up in the cradle, and plays jigs, reels, and lively dance music. The inmates of the cottage are forced, greatly against their inclination, to commence dancing, and this enforced amusement continues until they sink from exhaustion. When the infant is thus known to be undoubtedly a changeling, it is removed on an iron shovel from the cabin, and placed on the centre of the dunghill, whilst rhymes are recited by the fairy doctor directing the operation, together with some verses in Irish, of which the following, according to the Rev. John O'Hanlon, is a correct translation :—

"Fairy men and women all,
List! it is your baby's call;
For on the dunghill's top he lies
Beneath the wide inclement skies.
Then come with coach and sumptuous train,
And take him to your mote again;
For if ye stay till cocks shall crow,
You 'll find him like a thing of snow;
A pallid lump, a child of scorn,
A monstrous brat of fairies born.
But ere you bear the boy away,
Restore the child you took instead;
When like a thief, the other day,
You robbed my infant's cradle bed.
Then give me back my only son,
And I 'll forgive the harm you 've done;
And nightly for your sportive crew,
I 'll sweep the hearth and kitchen too;
And leave you free your tricks to play,
Whene'er you choose to pass this way.
Then like 'good people,' do incline
To take your child, and give back mine."

The ceremony completed, all retire into the cottage, the door is carefully closed, whilst additional incantations are recited. Any sound made by the wind, or the noise occasioned by a passing vehicle, is regarded as heralding the arrival and departure of a fairy host. The cabin door is then cautiously opened, the assembled party walk to the manure heap, and the poor emaciated baby is handed to the deluded parents by the fairy doctor, who declares that the true child has been returned by the "good people." Crofton Croker's legend of "The Changeling" may be given as a typical example of this class of stories :—A young married woman went with several companions to bind up the wheat in harvest time, and left the infant she was nursing in a sheltered corner of the field well wrapped up in her cloak. "When her work was finished she returned to where the child was, but in place of her own, she found a thing

in the cloak, that was not half the size, and that kept up such a crying you might have heard a mile off. So Mary Scannell guessed how the case stood, and, without stop or stay, away she took it in her arms, pretending to be mighty fond of it all the while, to a wise woman. The wise woman told her in a whisper not to give it enough to eat, and to beat and pinch it without mercy, which Mary Scannell did; and just in one week after to the day, when she awoke in the morning, she found her own child lying by her side in the bed. The fairy that had been put in its place did not like the usage it got from Mary Scannell, who understood how to treat it, like a sensible woman as she was, and away it went after a week's trial, and sent her own child back to her."

If a child accidentally falls, it should at once be given three small pinches of salt, for the fairies, in trying to carry it off, caused it to tumble, and salt is a well-known antidote against fairy influence; for this reason, an infant after birth is frequently given salt. Salt in itself is considered very lucky. Though it be the last in the house, no person ever refuses it to a neighbour; for, although it is unlucky to give away the last of anything, it would entail even worse luck to refuse the gift of salt.

If an infant is born with teeth, these must be at once drawn by the nearest blacksmith—the representative of the ancient caird. When an older child loses his first teeth, care is taken to make him throw them into the fire, or else evil will befall him, for nothing belonging to the body should be parted with, lest it fall into the hands of the fairies or of ill-wishers.

The fairies are supposed to issue by moonlight from their underground dwellings, and disport themselves on the green sward of the raths (fig. 2).

> "But woe betide the wand'ring wight
> That treads its circle in the night."

These elfin sports continue during the summer and autumn nights; but the first crow of the cock, or the first glow of the morning, is a signal for instant retreat to their underground dwellings. They are so tiny and lightfooted, and touch the green blades of grass so delicately, that they never shake off the dew-drops, even during their wildest gyrations.

> "Graciles tripudiamus,
> Molle gramen nec curvamus;
> Pede festo quod calcatum,
> Choris noctu consecratum,
> Spicâ vernat altiore;
> Lux cum redeat Aurorae."

FIG. 2.—"The Fairies are dancing by brake and by bower."

This may be thus rendered :—

> "On tops of dewy grass,
> So nimbly do we pass,
> The young and tender stalk
> Ne'er bends when we do walk:
> Yet in the morning may be seen,
> Where we the night before have been."

Fig. 3.—The Fairy Piper.
From Mrs. Hall's *Irish Sketches*.

They are generally clad in green, or white silver-spangled clothes, with high-peaked and wide-brimmed scarlet caps. On clear moonlight nights they are often seen dancing on and around the large umbrella-shaped mushrooms growing on old forts, to the accompaniment of fairy bagpipes (fig. 3). If espied by earthly beings, they endeavour to entice them to visit their subterranean abodes (fig. 4). Such visitors have need of the practice of the greatest asceticism to extricate themselves from fairydom.

Fig. 4.
"They endeavour to entice them to visit their subterranean abodes."

> "The fairies are dancing by brake and by bower,
> For this in their land is the merriest hour.
> Their steps are soft and their robes are light,
> And they trip it at ease in the clear moonlight.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Their queen is in youth and beauty there,
> And the daughters of earth are not half so fair.
> She will take thee to ramble by grove and by glen,
> And the friends of thy youth shall not know thee again."

Whether above or below ground one should never partake of fairy fare. Mr. C. J. Hamilton states that on the road from Clifden to Letterfrack "is a hill called Crukuaragh, where the fairies are supposed to live. Some years ago two boys were drowned near Crump Island, and shortly afterwards a man was coming back from a fair, and as he passed Crukuaragh he saw a house. He thought, 'I 've niver seen a house there afore anyway. I 'll ask to sit down and git an air of the fire.' He went in and he saw an old woman, and sitting by the fire were the two boys that were drowned. The woman asked him to have a cup of tea; and, while she went out to fill the kettles, one of the boys gave him a hint to be off. 'For,' says he, 'if you ate or dhrink bit or sup in this house ye'll niver get out ov it agin.' So he went away, and the next time he passed that way there was not a sign of a house there."

If you place your ear to the ground when the fairies withdraw, you can hear them moving about in the subterranean chambers; you can also recognise the clink of money, and the noise of the locking and unlocking of their great treasure chests.

In some raths the fairies are of extra jovial disposition; an artificial mound in the county Sligo, frequented by these beings, is styled in Irish, "the fairy mound of laughter," and there are several places in the south of Ireland called by the pseudo-scriptural name of "Mount Sion"; but "Mount" is only a translation of the Irish name for a hill, and "Sion" an adaptation of *sheeaun*, the Irish for a fairy mount.

There was a strange notion held by the peasantry that two straws put across the path used by the fairies caused them to stumble:—

> "Then raising their voices
> Beyond all believing,
> They send forth three wild shrieks
> Of uttermost grieving;
> For Hugh was their neighbour,
> And he would not vex 'em.
> By the crossing of straws,
> Or such tricks to perplex 'em."

The picturesque and beautiful appearance of the "wee folk," their splendid halls and magnificent feasts, are, it is alleged, mere illusions. If you procure a box of fairy ointment, and rub it on the eyelids, you instantly see everything as it really is. The finely-dressed little people are wizened and deformed imps, the splendid halls are damp earth-floored caverns, the sumptuous feasts are a meagre supply of squalid food, and their treasure chests are filled, not with gold, but with mere heaps of withered leaves and other rubbish.

Well-known pipers or fiddlers are also transported to underground dwellings, where, if they eat and drink of the good things offered to them, they are never allowed to return to their earthly homes.

The cheering (?) notes of the bagpipes, and the more melodious sound of the fiddle, are often to be heard in the stillness of night issuing from the innermost recesses of raths, the invisible denizens of these retreats footing it in the dance to the cadence of these lively and unearthly strains. A gentleman, on entering a cabin in a remote district, observed a young girl crouched before the fire, chanting a melancholy-sounding song. On inquiry, he learned that the sufferer had overheard fairy music, that she had lost her memory, took no interest in what was going on around, and heard continually the soft and plaintive music of the wee folk.

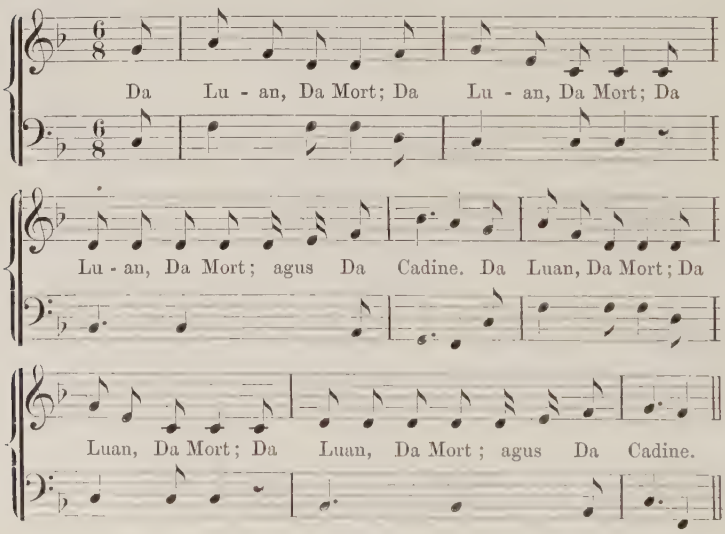

Fig. 5.
Fairy Music. From Crofton Croker's Fairy Tales.

The fairies often reward good earthly musicians in the manner they think will be most acceptable. Crofton Croker recounts how a poor little hunchback, sitting one night at the foot of a rath, heard the sound of many voices singing within the fort. The words of the song were—*Da Luan, Da Mort*; *Da Luan, Da Mort*; *Da Luan, Da Mort*; then there was a pause, and the melody went on again. The hunchback, tired of hearing the

same round sung over and over without change, watched his opportunity, and after the pause, when *Da Luan, Da Mort*, had been sung three times, he went on with the tune, adding the words *Agus Da Cadine*, and then continued accompanying the voices inside the moat, finishing the melody when the pause again came with *Agus Da Cadine* (fig. 5). The fairies were so delighted at this change that they conveyed the hunchback into their underground hall, and, to reward him for his musical skill, removed his hump, and he emerged from fairydom a well-shaped dapper little fellow. Various raths in different parts of Ireland are assigned as the scene of this story, and to render the recitation of the tale more effective, the rude melody is usually sung to the listeners by the story-teller.

The Breton legend is almost identical with the Irish, and furnishes an exact parallel in nearly every detail; it is also more complete.

People who chance to be on a rath at night, and hear the music of the fairies, are haunted by the melody, and long to return and listen to it, and generally either become mad or commit suicide. In the islands off the west coast the peasantry believe that the witching power of the underground music is so strong that whoever hears it cannot choose but follow the sound. Young girls are drawn away by the enchantment, and dance all night with Finvarra the King, "though in the morning they are found fast asleep in bed, yet with a memory of all they had heard and seen; and some say that, while with the fairies, the young women learn strange secrets of love potions, by which they can work spells and dangerous charms over those whose love they desire, or upon any who has offended and spoken ill of them. It is a beautiful idea that the Irish airs, so plaintive, mournful, and tear-compelling, are but the remembered echoes of that spirit-music which had power to draw souls away to the fairy mansions, and hold them captive by the sweet magic of the melody."

The fairies, however, are not always given to amusement, music, and gaiety. Very often the tiny inhabitants of two neighbouring forts quarrel, and sanguinary conflicts ensue. These encounters generally take place during the night-time, and poor mortals, living in the vicinity, are terrified by shrill screams and all the various noises which accompany a fiercely-contested battle; in the morning the scene of the struggle is covered with tiny pools of blood, and other traces of the fight.

About the year 1800, a battle was fought in the county Kilkenny between two fairy hosts. The opposing armies "lined the ditches" on either side of the road, the public thoroughfare being the debatable ground. The hawthorns on the fences were broken, as if crushed beneath the feet of infantry and cavalry;

and although the previous evening hedges and fields were uninjured and blooming, yet in the morning the branches of trees, bushes, and the green sward were dyed with blood. In the year 1797, a great number of fairies were observed at midday marching in military array across a bog between Maryborough and Stradbally. In 1836, another party was seen crossing the hills at Ballyfriar, in the same locality—in fact, from numerous recorded instances of armed parties of the fairy host appearing in this neighbourhood, the county Kilkenny must have been their favourite exercising ground.

In a place called Cashel, about a mile from Ballyroar, there stood a solitary hawthorn, supposed to be held sacred by the "good people." On a fine summer's day a peasant, whose house stood opposite this bush, saw soldiers, many hundred in number, marching up this tree. Seized with sudden terror, he fled into his cabin; but, on emerging from his shelter some time afterwards, he, to his great astonishment, beheld many hundreds of little men creeping like bees along the boughs of the hawthorn, each individual only the size of an ordinary mortal's little finger.

"Sheeauns," or fairy mounds, are met with in great profusion, particularly in the west of Ireland—in fact, their number would lead one to believe that some parts of the country must have been, at one time, more thickly peopled with fairies than with human beings. Their numbers must have been diminished by their internecine feuds. Quite recently a patriarchal peasant informed a gentleman that he had seen a number of fairies around him, and this was at once corroborated by his companions, who stated that they had observed a field covered with them, whilst others engaged in quarrying left off work, as the place was so full of the "good people" as to be hot. Although the gentleman immediately offered £100 if a fairy was shown to him, and £50 for a photograph of one, he has not yet had the opportunity of paying the reward. This appears strange; for William Allingham, the poet, describes the "good people" as being everywhere:—

"By the craggy hillside,
  Through the mosses bare,
They have planted thorn trees
  For pleasure, here and there.
Is any man so daring
  As dig them up in spite,
He shall find their sharpest thorns
  In his bed at night."

One rather rare kind of fairy also to be described—the Leprechaun, or hermit-fairy, of peculiar habits, tastes, and powers—

lives a solitary life; for in Leprechaun history there is, at present, no recorded instance of two of this class of "good people" ever having been seen together. The Leprechaun loves solitude and retirement, frequenting undisturbed nooks, where he can sit in perfect quiet, without fear of interruption, in the pursuit of his usual occupation, that of a brogue- or shoe-maker (fig. 6). Though carrying on this humble trade, he is described as wearing the red square-cut coat and long waistcoat richly laced with gold, the knee-breeches, shoes, and cocked hat, characteristic of the beaux of the last century. He possesses the power of bestowing unbounded wealth on whatever mortal can catch and keep him under his eye, until, weary of human observation, he gives the ransom demanded for his liberty. Nearly always, by some device, he makes his captor avert his gaze, if only for a moment, when he instantly vanishes.

FIG. 6.—The Leprechaun.
From Mr. & Mrs. Hall's *Ireland.*

There is another gruesome spirit of the hobgoblin species, who is generally seen without his head—in fact, it is doubtful if the Dullaghan has ever been observed with his cranium properly placed on his body, as he generally carries it under his arm, or produces it from his capacious pockets. This, however, appears to be a comparatively modern kind of spectre, and headless phantoms are not confined to Ireland. St. Augustine, whose veracity, it is to be supposed, no one will question, actually preached to beings of whom it is said: "et vidimus ibi multos homines ac mulieres capita non habentes." Other legends of saints demonstrate that many of them can dispense with a cranium, as St. Denis, who walked from Paris to the place which now bears his name, without his head. This remarkable performance is quite eclipsed by that of the patron saint of a Spanish church at Saragossa, who strolled along for three miles carrying his head in his hands, and talking all the time.

Spirits (good, bad, and indifferent) cannot cross a stream of running water. The same idea prevails in Scotland. Burns, in *Tam o' Shanter*, thus adjures the mare on which Tam, pursued by the witches, is riding:—

> "Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
> And win the key-stane of the brig;
> There at them thou thy tail may toss,
> A running stream they dare na cross."

A dog or a horse, especially a mare, often sees ghosts and apparitions when they are invisible to the human ken. Animals generally announce their presence by showing great terror, the dog whimpers and trembles, the horse is almost paralysed with fear. The idea that spirits cannot cross running water may have originated in a curious phenomenon with regard to the movements of "Will-o'-the-wisp," or the bog spirit, the phantom of the moors, whose dancing light lures its followers into miry places. When this light reaches the edge of a stream of running

Fig. 7.
Will-o'-the-wisp, or the Bog Sprite.

water, it is driven backward by the currents of air accompanying the flow of the water, it then makes several essays, returning again and again, before it finally glides along and down the banks of the stream which, on account of the air-current, it cannot cross. On the death of a man of the Khasi tribe away from his native district, after the corpse is burnt, the calcined bones are carefully collected and carried back to his village. The spirit follows the remains, but it cannot pass a river, so the

people carrying the bones stretch a cord across the stream styled the "string bridge," and the spirit of the deceased takes advantage of it to glide over.

It is now known that marsh gas is due to the decomposition of vegetable matter in bogs, swamps, and stagnant water. If a pole is thrust into the mud at the bottom of a pond, or the mud stirred up, in the summer season, this gas will rise in large bubbles to the surface, and in the winter season, when the surface of the water is frozen, large air bubbles are seen locked up here and there in the heart of the ice. In either of the above instances, if a light be applied to the gas as it escapes from its imprisonment in the water or from the ice, it will take fire; but a difficult problem to solve is how the gas, which issues from boggy ground and constitutes "will-o'-the-wisps" becomes ignited. This is alleged, by some, to be due to the decomposition of certain animal substances, the gases from which mingle with and ignite those from the decaying vegetable remains in their vicinity.

CHAPTER II.

MARRIAGE LORE.

Women prohibited from setting foot on certain Holy Islands—St. Kevin, St. Senanus, St. Columbkille, in particular, and Irish Saints in general, inexorably repelled the Fair Sex—Irish Saints of most exemplary character—Exclusion of Women from Sacred Localities, a practice far older than Christianity—Saints' or Priests' "Beds"—Sure specific to remove Barrenness—As effective as the prolific Shadow of Rabelais'—Abbey Steeple—Females prohibited from drawing water from certain Holy Wells, or from washing in them—Separate Burial-places for Men and for Women—Imagined Polution by Contact with Women—The subject of Ancient Marriage Customs in Ireland has not been grappled with by Antiquarians—Marriage Portions—Marriage by Capture—Pursuit and Capture of the Bride—Bringing Home the Bride—Rape of the Sabines, a Mythical Tradition of the ancient way of Procuring Wives by Physical Force—Rape of Wives by the Picts from the Gaels—Ancient Irish Laws defining the penalties consequent on the different recognized modes of Abduction—Irregular or Temporary Marriages—Wedding Festivities—"The Straw Boys"—Traces of the ancient custom of the *Couvade*, or "Hatching"—Women after marriage retain their maiden names—Descent still traced in the Female Line.

An old Icelandic author states that, into a certain island in one of the Irish lakes, no female of any animal, including the human species, was allowed to enter. This rule seems to have been enforced, not only in Ireland, but in various parts of Europe. Curson, in his *Monasteries of the Levant*, states that "no female animal of any sort is admitted to any part of the peninsula of Mount Athos; and since the days of Constantine the soil of the holy mountain has never been contaminated by the tread of a woman's foot."

Moore has immortalised this idea in the legend of Glendalough, where St. Kevin hurls Kathleen into the waters for daring to intrude on his presence and on his mediations; yet—

> "Soon the saint, yet, ah! too late,
> Felt her love, and mourned her fate."

It has been wittily remarked of this most strictly moral man—

> "If hard lying could gain it, he surely gained heaven;
> For on rock lay his limbs, and rock pillow'd his head,
> Whenever this good holy saint kept his bed;
> And keep it he must, even to his last day,
> For I 'm sure he could never have thrown it away."

St. Senan also inexorably hunted away the fair sex—

> "But legends hint that had the maid
> Till morning light delay'd,
> And given the saint one rosy smile,
> She ne'er had left his lonely isle."

St. Columbkille seems likewise to have been credited with a horror of women. He detested even cows on their account, and would not allow one to come within sight of the walls of his monastery, because, as he explained:—"Where there is a cow there must be a woman, and where there is a woman there must be mischief."

Writers, almost without exception, depict the early Irish saints as of most exemplary character. Whether the long past ages in which they lived "lent enchantment to the view," and hid from modern gaze little episodes in the lives of other saints not quite as correct as the two foregoing examples, it is now impossible to say. Let us suffice that, in point of morality, they contrast most favourably with the picture drawn of Scottish monks by Sir Walter Scott:—

> "The living dead, whose sober brow
> Oft shrouds such thoughts as thou hast now,
> Whose hearts within are seldom cured
> Of passions by their vows abjured;
> When under sad and solemn show
> Vain hopes are nursed, wild wishes glow."

The exclusion of women from sacred localities is a practice far older than Christianity. They were prohibited by the Romans from entering the temples of Hercules, the reason for which is given by Plutarch and Macrobius.

Irish examples could be multiplied to any extent. The monks of Iniscathy Abbey—from its foundation to its demolition—are said never to have permitted a woman to enter the island. A lady having requested speech with a monk, he replied—"What have women to do with monks? We will neither admit you or any other woman into the island." The lady replied—"If you believe Christ will receive my soul, why do you turn away my

body?" "That," he answered, "I verily believe, but we never permit any woman to enter this place, so God preserve you. Return to the world lest you be a scandal to us, for however chaste you may be you are a woman."

"Cui Praesul, Quid faeminis
Commune est cum monachis?
Nec te, nec ullam aliam
Admittimus in insulam.

Tunc illa ad Episcopum;
Si meum credis spiritum
Posse Christum suscipere,
Quid me repellis corpore?

Credo inquit, hoc optimè,
Sed nullae unquam faeminae
Huc ingressam concedimus;
Esto; salvet te Dominus.

Redi iterum ad saeculum,
Ne sis nobis in scandalum:
Et si es casta pectore
Sexum habes in corpore."

There are, however, some still surviving fragmentary relics of ancient customs pointing to a state of things having formerly existed in Ireland resembling those still prevalent in some parts of the East, as well as in Africa. A night spent in one of the old churches at Termonbary, near Lough Ree, or passed in a cleft in the rock at the source of the river Lee, by a married woman who had not been blessed with issue, proved as effective in removing barrenness as did ever the prolific shadow of Rabelais' Abbey Steeple; and is it not strange that, although the early Christian missionaries are reputed to have held women in holy abhorrence, a visit to one of their "beds" was usually a favourite religious exercise of devout women, who imagined that by lying in it and turning thrice round, at the same time repeating certain prayers, a favourable answer would be granted to their maternal requests.

Amongst some African tribes a man is at liberty to return his wife to her family and demand repayment of her purchase money if she bear no children. However, before doing so, he must send her to the "bed" of a fetichman; but if, after that, she still remains barren, the woman's family are bound to take her back and repay her price to the disappointed Benedict.

Almost any number of Irish "Saints'" or "Priests' Beds" might be enumerated; a few shall suffice. A writer, describing the Island of Devenish in the year 1815, says that "a few paces to the north of St. Molaise's house is his 'bed,' which is a stone

trough (coffin) sunk level with the surface of the ground, six feet in length and fifteen inches wide, in which people lie down and repeat some prayers, in hope of relief from any pains with which they may be affected. About 100 paces north of St. Mary's Abbey is St. Nicholas's Well, to which many resort for relief, repeat some prayers, and leave a rag suspended on a bush near it."

In the parish of Killady, county Cork, is St. Ita's Well, where "rounds" are still paid. An oblong hole in the ground not far distant is called "St. Ita's Bed," where, "if child-bearing women roll themselves, they will not suffer the pains of child-birth. Needless to add, no decent woman would do this in public, but I am told several come here privately on by-days for that purpose, or take home a handful of the earth from the "Bed" for the purpose of rubbing it around their bodies in the name of the Holy Trinity."

About the year 1873 the Rev. James Page thus describes a scene at the station called "St. Patrick's Bed," on Croagh Patrick—"All the devotees do not go there—none but those that are barren—and the abominable practices committed there ought to make human nature, in its most degraded state, blush. This station course is forty yards in circumference. Round this they go seven times, then enter the bed, turn round seven times, take up some small pebbles, and bring them home, in order to prevent barrenness, and to banish rats and mice. The greater part of those who go through this station stop upon the hill all night that they may sleep in the bed."

On Inishmore, now called Church Island, in Lough Gill, county Sligo, are the ruins of a church founded by St. Loman in the sixth century. In a rock, near the door of the church, there used to be a depression or cavity in a slab of rock called "Our Lady's Bed." This was a favourite resort of devout women, who imagined that by lying in it, turning thrice round, and at the same time repeating certain prayers, a favourable answer would be granted to their maternal requests. This belief has long ceased, the island is no longer used as a burial place, and the "Bed" has disappeared, or cannot now be identified.

In one of the wild desolate islands off the Western coast there is, according to Lady Wilde, a stone receptable called "The Bed of the Holy Ghost." Many people go from the mainland for the purpose of passing a night in this "bed," believing that "it heals all diseases," and that "it brings good luck to all, and to women the blessing of children."

The small stones on the top of the Ballymascanlan Cromleac, near Dundalk, locally known as the "Pulleek Stone," are thrown by the credulous, who believe that if one rests there the thrower will be married before the expiration of the year. This is an

excellent example of a world-wide superstition, for J. F. Campbell records having found in Japan small piles of stones at the foot of every image and memorial stone, and on every altar by the wayside. Another traveller, describing the ceremony which gives birth to these heaps of stones, states that women who desire children make pilgrimages to a sacred stone on the holy hill of Nikko and throw pebbles at it. If they succeed in hitting it their wish is granted. He maliciously adds that they seem very clever at the game. He also describes a seated statue of Buddha, at Tokio, on whose knees women fling stones with the same object, and further relates that the grotesque statues guarding the entrance of another temple were covered with pellets of chewed paper shot through the bars of the railing which surrounded the idols. A successful shot implied the attainment of the spitter's wish.

In Upper Brittany pins are thrown into the holy well of St. Goustan by those who wish to be married within the year; the pins stick point downward into the bottom of the well if the prayer is to be granted. Girls still resort to a little shrine on the beach at Perros Guirec, in Lower Brittany. The postulant, her prayer concluded, sticks a pin into the wooden statue of the saint, which is riddled with pin-holes, and her wish for a husband is infallibly granted within a year. Similar rites are observed in Poitou and Alsace, and the like practices exist almost all over France, or have died out, in many places, only recently.

In an island near Achill there is a holy well at which no female is allowed to draw water. It must be handed to her by a male, be he even an infant, whose hand she should place within her own in laying hold of the vessel when drawing the water which may be afterwards used for the ordinary purpose of everyday life. Numerous anecdotes are recounted of the misfortunes which have happened to women who persisted in drawing water from this well. An old man who lived for many years on this island solemnly declared that he had, on several occasions, cleaned out the well after women had taken water from it, and that on each occasion it was full of blood and corruption. From the time he commenced to clean out the well until the task was accomplished, no water flowed into it; but as soon as the cleansing was finished, clear spring water immediately burst forth.

According to an ancient legend, quoted by Professor O'Curry, the River Shannon originated from the profanation of a sacred pagan well by a woman.

Women were not permitted to wash their feet in holy wells, though men were allowed to do so, for the Irish held a great many superstitions relative to water in which feet had been dipped.

In Nennius' *Historia Britonum*, the Mill of Kilkeary in Ossory is described as the thirty-second wonder of Ireland. This ancient mill would neither grind on the Sabbath, nor would it grind stolen grain, and women dare not enter it. The site of this semi-sacred edifice is now occupied by a modern building, and for its present characteristics the miller can answer.

In many localities it was forbidden to bury men and women in the same cemetery. The prohibition still occasionally survives as at Inishmurray; and it is an almost universal belief that if a woman be buried in the men's ground, the corpse will be removed during the night, by unseen hands, to the women's cemetery, and *vice versâ*. The custom of separate burial is derived from very ancient times, for the old pagans had, in some instances, separate burying places for the two sexes. A little to the north of Buttevant, on a height overlooking the road, stands an ancient conical sepulchral tumulus, styled in Irish "the mound of the boys." A tumulus of corresponding dimensions, called "the mound of the girls," is in the immediate vicinity.

This idea of supposed pollution by contact with women appears to be much the same in all ages, and all the world over. In the present day the movements of the fleet of trading canoes belonging to some of the natives of New Guinea are governed by minute and elaborate regulations on this subject. No woman is allowed on board any canoe for two months previous to its sailing, and during the entire period of absence the leading men in each canoe must abstain from all intercourse with the fair sex.

So much similarity and so many correspondences exist in the every-day routine prevailing among races generally considered distinct, that the ethnological differences they exhibit are of little weight when what they possess in common is taken into consideration. To unravel the tangled skein of primitive life as it formerly existed in Ireland, we must look to the tribes of Central Africa, of America, the hillmen of India, and the Pacific Islanders. With many of these we find marriage laws unknown, the family system undeveloped, and the only acknowledged blood relationship that through females. "These facts of to-day are, in a sense, the most ancient history. In the science of law and society, 'old' means not old in chronology, but in structure; that is most archaic which is nearest to the beginning of human progress considered as a development, and that is most 'modern' which is farthest removed from that beginning."

In the whole range of legal symbolism there is no trait more remarkable than that of capture in marriage ceremonies, nor is there any the meaning of which has been less studied.

The Rev. Edward Chichester, A.M., writing in 1815, on ancient customs in the parish of Culdaff, county Donegal, says that there

were many which appeared extraordinary, though not confined to any one district of Ireland, the most singular he mentions being elopement previous to matrimony, and that notwithstanding the absence of all difficulties which might stand in the way of the union of the lovers.

"The symbol of capture occurs whenever, after a contract of marriage, it is necessary for the constitution of the relation of husband and wife that the bridegroom or his friends should go through the form of feigning to steal the bride, or carry her off from her friends by superior force. The marriage is agreed upon by bargain, and the theft or abduction follows as a concerted matter of form to make valid the marriage. The test then of the presence of the symbol in any case is, that the capture is concerted, and preceded by a contract of marriage. If there is no preceding contract, the case is one of actual abduction."

Those who approach the study of this interesting subject with unbiassed minds will readily perceive that there must have existed an early period of lawlessness, in which it was with women as with other kinds of property, "that he should take who had the power, and he should keep who can"; that wives were first obtained by force, then by theft, and later by trade and bargain.

The question of ancient marriage customs in Ireland has not been grappled with by antiquaries, and it is probable that, when the solution has been attained, it will exhibit matrimonial alliance in the Emerald Isle in a very different light from that in which it has been hitherto depicted by an extravagantly eulogistic school of writers.

Sir Henry Piers, in a *Description of Westmeath* written about the year 1682, and published in *Collec. de Rebus-Hib.*, vol. i., p. 122, says regarding Irish marriages, that "especially in those counties where cattle abound, the parents and friends on each side meet on the side of a hill, or, if the weather be cold, in some place of shelter about midway between both dwellings. If agreement ensue, they drink the 'agreement bottle,' as they call it, which is a bottle of good usquebaugh (whiskey), and this goes merrily round. For payment of the portion, which is generally a determinate number of cows, little care is taken. The father or next of kin to the bride sends to his neighbours and friends *sub mutuae vicissitudinis obtentu*, and everyone gives his cow or heifer, and thus the portion is quickly paid. Nevertheless, caution is taken from the bridegroom on the day of delivery for restitution of the cattle in case the bride dies childless within a certain day, limited by agreement; and in this case every man's own beast is restored. Thus care is taken that no man shall grow rich by frequent marriages." In the present day the routine is somewhat as follows:—

Some desirable partner for their son is discovered by his parents—desirable either in respect of the amount of her fortune, in cash or kind, or the land she possesses. The families are generally strangers to each other; so, to put the matter in train, it becomes necessary to engage the services of an intermediary to place the proposal before the young woman's parents. The professional "match-maker" is usually elderly, shrewd, calculating, and versed in all the arts of country diplomacy. The commission given, he calls as if by accident, and without making any definite proposal, sketches an outline of the desired arrangement. Negotiations and the all-important question of the fortune follow, and here occurs the match-maker's opportunity, as his services are usually rewarded in proportion to the terms he obtains, so ample play is given to his powers of "blarney" and wealth of argument. If the girl is possessed of a fortune, the novelty of the transaction comes in, as the dowry passes, not into the estate of the young couple, but into the pocket of the bridegroom's parents, who, in consideration, agree to assign the farm to their son, charged with certain payments.

A traveller in Ireland, about the year 1830, describes a rustic marriage festival which he came on by chance one evening in the wilds of Kerry. The account is thus summarised by Lady Wilde:—"A large hawthorn tree that stood in the middle of a field, near a stream, was hung all over with bits of coloured stuff, while lighted rush candles were placed here and there amongst the branches, to symbolise, no doubt, the new life of brightness preparing for the bridal pair. Then came a procession of boys marching slowly with flutes and pipes made of hollow reeds, and one struck a tin can with a stick at intervals, with a strong rhythmical cadence. This represented the plectrum. Others rattled slates and bones between their fingers, and beat time, after the manner of the Crotolistrai—a rude attempt at music, which appears amongst all nations of the earth, even the most savage. A boy followed, bearing a lighted torch of bog-wood. Evidently he was Hymen, and the flame of love was his cognisance. After him came the betrothed pair hand-in-hand, a large square canopy of black stuff being held over their heads—the emblem, of course, of the mystery of love, shrouded and veiled from the prying light of day. Behind the pair followed two attendants, bearing high over the heads of the young couple a sieve filled with meal, a sign of the plenty that would be in their house, and an omen of good luck and the blessing of children. A wild chorus of dancers and singers closed the procession; the chorus of the epithalamium and grotesque figures, probably the traditional fauns and satyrs, nymphs and bacchanals, mingled together with mad laughter and shouts and waving of green branches.

"The procession then moved on to a bonfire, evidently the ancient altar, and having gone round it three times, the black shroud was lifted from the bridal pair, and they kissed each other before all the people, who shouted and waved their branches in approval.

"Then the preparations for the marriage supper began; on which, however, the traveller left them, having laid some money on the altar as an offering of good-will for the marriage future. At the wedding supper there was always plenty of eating and drinking and dancing, and the feast was prolonged till near morning, when the wedding song was sung by the whole party of friends standing, while the bride and bridegroom remained seated at the head of the table. The chorus of one of these ancient songs may be thus literally translated from the Irish:—

> "'It is not day, nor yet day,
> It is not day, nor yet morning;
> It is not day, nor yet day,
> For the moon is shining brightly.'

"Another marriage song was sung in Irish frequently, each verse ending with the lines:—

> "'There is sweet enchanting music, and the golden harps are ringing;
> And twelve comely maidens deck the bride-bed for the bride.'

"A beautiful new dress was presented to the bride by her husband at the marriage feast, at which also the father paid down her dowry before the assembled guests; and all the place round the house was lit by torches when night came on, and the song and the dance continued till daylight, with much speech-making and drinking of poteen. All fighting was steadily avoided at a wedding, for a quarrel would be considered a most unlucky omen. A wet day was also held to be very unlucky, as the bride would assuredly weep for sorrow throughout the year. But the bright warm sunshine was hailed joyfully, according to the old saying:—

> "'Happy is the the bride that the sun shines on;
> But blessed is the corpse that the rain rains on.'"

On the day of bringing home, the bridegroom and his friends ride out and meet the bride and her friends at the place of meeting. "Having come near to each other, the custom was of old to cast short darts at the company that attended the bride, but at such distance that seldom any hurt ensued; yet it is not out of the memory of man that the Lord of Howth, on such an occasion, lost an eye."

Even at the commencement of this century, countrymen, when going to a marriage, generally rode on horseback, each having behind him a woman seated on a pillion; the bride was mounted behind the best man; the bridegroom, however, rode alone. That old world relic of barbarism, the pursuit and capture of the bride, then still existed. The latter pretended to run away, pursued by the bridegroom; and even yet the bridal party usually set out for a long drive, the bride and bridegroom, bridesmaid and best man, being on the first car, the guests following in an order which usually depends upon the respective merits and speed of their horses. This drive was sometimes called "dragging home the bride." Sometimes the term was applied to the drive from the parent's house to that of her husband.

Weddings were made the occasion of great festivities, usually followed by a dance kept up till the greater number of the guests were stretched upon the floor through the combined effects of fatigue and other causes.

In remote parts of the country, "straw boys" still appear at the house disguised in tall conical-shaped straw masks (fig. 8), decorated with stripes of red and green cloth; they also wear white shirts and red petticoats set off with many coloured ribbons. The leader dances with the bride, the next in rank with the bridesmaid, and the remainder of the band find partners as best they can. They are usually well entertained and treated to drink. They formerly demanded money, and indulged in boisterous play; but in most localities this is a thing of the past.

Lord Kames, in *Sketches of the History of Man*, states that the following marriage ceremony was in his day (1807), or had till shortly before, been customary among the Welsh:—

"On the morning of the wedding day, the bridegroom, accompanied with his friends on horseback, demands the bride. Her friends, who are likewise on horseback, give a positive refusal, upon which a mock scuffle ensues. The bride, mounted behind her nearest kinsman, is carried off, and is pursued by the bridegroom and his friends with loud shouts. It is not uncommon, on such an occasion, to see two or three hundred sturdy Cambro-Britons riding at full speed, crossing and jostling, to the no small amusement of the spectators. When they have fatigued themselves and their horses, the bridegroom is suffered to overtake his bride. He leads her away in triumph, and the scene is concluded with feasting and festivity."

In Roman history, the story of the rape of the Sabines should be accepted as a mythical tradition of the ancient way of procuring wives by force, and, as might naturally be expected, the story, differing slightly in form, is to be found in the folk-lore of many tribes and in many places. In the Irish Nennius there is a

Fig. 8.
Wedding Dance Mask. Slightly less than quarter real size. Welch's Irish Views.

rape of wives by the Picts from the Gael, and the Irish are also represented as giving three hundred women to the Picts, conditional on the succession to the crown amongst the Picts being through females only :—

> " 'There were oaths imposed on them,
> By the stars, by the earth,
> *That from the nobility of the mother*
> *Should always be the right of the sovereignty.*'

" The story of the oaths is, no doubt, a fable to explain the *descensus per umbilicum* of the Picts. But in 'Duan Gircanash,' a poem on the origin of the Gaedhel, reciting the same event, the Picts are represented as stealing the three hundred wives :—

> " 'Cruithne, son of Cuig, took their women from them—
> It is directly stated—
> Except Tea, wife of Hermion,
> Son of Miledh.'

And in consequence of the capture, the Gael, being left wifeless, had to form alliances with the original tribes of Ireland :—

> " 'There were no charming noble wives
> For their young men ;
> Their women having been stolen, they made alliance
> With the Tuatha Dea.' "

Mr. C. Staniland Wake, in *Marriage and Kinship*, remarks :— " In the Book of Aicill, under the head of 'Abduction without leave,' it is said that the child of a woman who had been abducted without leave from her family, unless begotten more than a month after the abduction, belonged not to the abductor, but the mother's family. If the mother had been forcibly abducted it belonged to them absolutely, and they might refuse to sell it to the abductors ; but if the mother had consented to the abduction he could force her family to sell. Where there had been an abduction without leave, the woman's family were allowed a month to bring the man to terms about her, or to reclaim her. If there was no contract, and the woman remained with her abductor longer than that period, her family lost their right to the offspring. Here we have different phases of 'marriage by capture'—forcible abduction, abduction without the consent of the woman herself, and abduction without leave of her family, which, no doubt, was wanting also when the consent of the woman had not been obtained. From the reference to the consent which was necessary to take the children from the woman's family and give them to their father it may be thought that abduction with the leave first had of the woman's family

was recognised. The arrangement referred to was made, however, after the abduction, a month being fixed by custom as the term within which it ought to be come to, or the woman brought back by her family." In this case there does not appear to be any such symbolical capture, or abduction by arrangement, as Dr. MacLellan's theory requires. There was actual capture, which was afterwards compounded for, but as the contract came after the abduction, the facts do not come within the theory according to which "the marriage is agreed upon by bargain, and the theft or abduction follows as a concerted matter of form, to make valid the marriage. It comes rather within the statement that 'if there is no preceding contract, the case is one of actual abduction.'"

In the 21st chapter of Deuteronomy, verses 10–14, we have the full description of marriage by capture as practised amongst the Israelites. Every detail, even to the paring of the nails of the captive before marriage, is identical with one of the Arab methods of terminating the widow's period of seclusion and allowing her to marry again.

The general conclusion which may be drawn from these and other allied facts, taken as a whole, may be interpreted as evidence of a gradual progress from a state of Totemism and female kinship, always tending upwards from that condition, exhibiting the development of human society as an evolution, moving, at different epochs, with varying rapidity.

Mr. John F. MacLennan, M.A., in *Primitive Marriage*, points out that "as civilization advanced, the system of kinship through females only, was succeeded by a system which acknowledged kinship through males also, and which in most cases passed into a system which acknowledged kinship through males only."

The Editors of the *Senchus Mor* appear to be of opinion that Patria Potestas did not enter into old Irish law, for they say (vol. ii., p. 4, *preface*) that "the provisions of the Irish family law do not appear to have any connection with the ancient Roman law. The Irish law demands for the mother a position equal with the father, and there is no trace of the exercise of that arbitrary power which was wielded by a Roman father over the members of his family." In the laws of Ireland there was thus, according to this evidence, no trace of Patria Potestas.

Many English writers allege that in former times the population living in remote parts of Ireland paid very little attention to the tie of matrimony—in fact, Keating admits the accusation, for he remarks: 'With regard to what is charged upon the Irish by other writers, that they very religiously observe their matrimonial contracts for the space of a year, and think they may then lawfully dissolve them, it is sufficient to reply that this

opinion prevailed only among the rude and unpolished part of the people, who despised the discipline of the Church, and denied the authority of their ecclesiastical superiors."

A "Teltown Marriage" is an expression often used in Meath to describe an irregular marriage in the present day, and a somewhat similar custom to that now to be described existed in Scotland, Wales, and part of England till very lately. If a couple who had been married for a twelvemonth disagreed, they returned to Teltown, to the centre of a fort styled Rathdoo, placed themselves back to back, one facing the north, the other the south, and walked out of the fort a divided couple free to marry again. (What numbers would now take advantage of this simple ceremony were it but legally efficacious!)

Another ancient idea was that people should not marry in the autumn in "binding" time, for they were sure to be unbound afterwards, and the bride and bridegroom should go out of the church door together, as in many localities it is believed that the first to go out will be the first to die.

There are also ill-disposed women, or witches, who by weaving spells during the wedding service prevent any children being born of the marriage. Their general manner of proceeding is to tie a knot on a string for every word uttered during the ceremony. Other traces of Pagan wedding customs still linger. "Giving away the bride" is a relic of the time when the bride was really sold; the promise of the bride in the marriage service to obey her husband was, at one time, no mere form; the bride's veil is a reminder that in days of old she was really shrouded from head to foot; rice poured over the newly married couple is doubtless a substitute for the staple food of the country, and a token of a hope that they may always have a sufficiency; old shoes were thrown after brides long before the introduction of Christianity, so that throughout the entire ritual of wedding observances, there is probably nothing that has not been hallowed by centuries of Paganism.

At the commencement of this century it was customary, in the parish of Culdaff, county Donegal, for an infant at its birth to be forced to swallow spirits, and it was immediately afterwards suspended by the upper jaw upon the midwife's fore-finger. This ceremony was performed for the purpose of preventing a disease which the people styled "headfall."

Another custom, not merely local, but found in other parts of the kingdom, was noticed by the Rev. Edward Cupples in the county Antrim. When his parishioners brought children to be baptized, a piece of bread and cheese was concealed in the infant's clothes. If several children were brought to the font at the same time, the males were first presented to the clergyman.

Strangest of all strange customs is that of the Couvade, the custom which obliges the husband to take to his bed when a child is born, sets the doctor to dose him, the woman to nurse, and his friends to visit him.

No certain information has as yet, it is believed, been obtained relative to the present continuance of this custom in Ireland, but the prominent position held by the mother in Irish birth-rites is very remarkable.

Solinus recounts how, before the Christian era, the Irish mother puts the "food on the sword of her husband, and lightly introduces the first particle (auspicium) of nourishment into the little child's mouth with the point of the sword, and with gentle vows, expresses a wish that he may never meet death otherwise than in wars and amid wars."

The Rev. F. A. Potter, in his description of the parish of Rathconrath, in the county Westmeath, in the year 1819, mentions the fact of all the married women calling themselves by their maiden names, and this is still common in Ulster. To the present day, in many places, women, although married, retain their maiden names, and in times not very remote often followed their mother's rather than their father's kindred. The study of this habit may, in time to come, unravel the tangled skein of this folk custom; but apparently the Couvade was prevalent in Ulster at a very remote period, for in one of the early centuries of the Christian Era, when the Northern Province was invaded by Maev, Queen of Connacht or the Western Province, she found all the adults confined to bed, so that no one, save the champion Cuchullin (Coolin) and his father, were able to defend the country against the invaders. This inactivity and inertia of the Northerns was interpreted by the light of a custom which seemed to render it intelligible. This singular inaction is accounted for in a tale entitled *Ceasnaidhean Uladh*, or the "Childbirth debility of the Ulstermen."

In the *Book of Leinster* it is recounted that Macha, wife of Crunniuc, was compelled to run in a chariot race with the horses of Conor, notwithstanding her earnest entreaty for a postponement of the contest on the plea that she was soon to become a mother. Her prayers were unavailing. After she had passed the goal she gave birth to twins, upon which she cursed the Ulstermen, and inflicted them yearly, at a certain season, with labour pains for five days and four nights (or four days and five nights). This was styled the *Noinden Ulad*. This incident is recited to account for the debility of the Ulstermen, when the Province was invaded by the celebrated Connacian Queen.

It may be well to explain that the term *Couvade* or "hatch-

ing" comes from Bearn, where the custom is so named. Even in the present day in Ireland, women before childbirth often wear the coat of the father of the expected arrival, with the idea that this will make the father share some of the pains of labour, and thus mitigate those of the mother. Women also often place the trousers of the father of the child round their neck, the effect of which is also to lighten their pains. In the same way, in India, amongst the Kukis, the doctor, not the patient, swallows the medicine. The custom of the Couvade is still practised in Southern India, in Yunnan, in China, in Borneo, Kamschatka, Greenland, and by many tribes of North and South America.

A traveller in Guiana in the year 1763 thus describes the custom of the Couvade there prevailing :—" When the wife lies in for the first time, the husband is obliged to keep his hammock, which is drawn up to the ridge of the house, and he is suffered to have no nourishment but a little cassava wheat and some water. When they let him down, they cut him in several parts of his body with some sharp instrument, made either of the fin of a fish or the tooth of some animal. Sometimes also they give him a sound whipping. Till this ceremony is performed upon the birth of the first child, the husband is the slave of his father-in-law, and as soon as it is over he is obliged to enter into the service of some old Indian, and quit his wife for some months. During this time he is not allowed to eat venison, pork, nor game of any kind: neither is he allowed to cleave wood, under a notion that it may hurt the infant. This servitude is terminated by a great festival, at which the husband is again put into possession of his liberty and his wife."

Descent can be easily proved from the mother, whilst it is, as a general rule, impossible to know the paternity of an infant. Whenever relationship is traced through females only, the custom may be safely regarded as a remnant of savagery ; for it should be borne in mind that in primitive times a child was considered to belong to the tribe generally, afterwards it came to be looked on as the property of the mother, then of the father, whilst it is only in modern times that it is looked on as related to both.

When a state of society was reached in which the father took the place previously held by the mother, the father instead of the mother came to be regarded as the parent. In the altered state of the case the father would, on the birth of the child, be bound by this idea to be careful of what he did or what he ate, for fear the child might be injured, and in this way the curious ceremony of the Couvade may have originated.

In classical literature there are clear illustrations of it; so also among the Tibareni, a tribe on the south coast of the

Black Sea, among the Cantabri in the North of Spain and in Corsica.

Mr. C. Staniland Wake, writing on the Couvade, directs attention to the fact that Dr. E. Tylor was of opinion that the custom "implicitly denies that physical separation of 'individuals' which a civilized man would probably set down as a first principle common by nature to all mankind. . . . It shows us a number of distinct and distant tribes deliberately holding the opinion that the connection between father and child is not only, as we think, a mere relation of parentage, affection, duty, but that their very bodies are joined by a physical bond, so that what is done to the one acts directly upon the other." Professor Max Muller offers the curious suggestion that the Couvade custom arises from some "secret spring in human nature" which led the husband at first to be "tyrannised over by his female relations, and afterwards frightened into superstition. He then began to make a martyr of himself till he made himself really ill, or took to his bed in self-defence." Sir John Lubbock sees in that custom a connection with the change which he supposes to have taken place from female to male kinship. He says:—"As soon as the change was made, the father would take the place held previously by the mother, and he, instead of she, would be regarded as the parent. Hence, on the birth of a child, the father would naturally be very careful what he did, and what he ate, for fear the child be injured." The suggestion made in this passage is carried further by M. Giraud-Teulon, who regards the Couvade as an imitation of nature, intended to give a colour to the fiction that the father had brought forth the child, and was for it a second mother, such a pretence being the only way in which a bond between the father and his child could be established. The French writer shows that "adoption by the imitation of nature" was practised among the Romans down to the first century of the empire. This was with a people who recognised relationship through both father and mother, and it was not a true instance of the Couvade. "So far, moreover, from this custom having any relation to a change from female to male kinship, it is most strongly pronounced among peoples having preferably a system of kinship through females. This is the case with the Arawaks and Caribs of British Guiana, and probably with the Abipones of Paraguay. M. Giraud-Teulon dwells on the domestic superiority of women among the Basquees with whom a husband n'entre dans la maison que pour reproduire et travailler pour la bien de sa femme."

"This 'reproduction' furnishes the explanation of the custom in question. With some of the Brazilian tribes, when a man becomes a father he goes to bed instead of his wife, and all the

women of the village come to console him for 'la peine et douleur qu'il a eu de faire cet enfant.' This agrees with the idea entertained by so many peoples that the child is derived from the father only, the mother being merely its nourisher. When such an idea is held, it is not surprising if, as among the Abipones, the belief is formed that 'the father's carelessness influences the new-born offspring, from a natural bond and sympathy of both,' or if the father abstains, either before or after the child's birth, from eating any food or performing any actions which are thought capable of doing it harm. Still more so, if the child is regarded, as is sometimes the case, as the reincarnation of the father, a notion which is supported by the fact, pointed out by Mr. Gerald Massey, that in the Couvade the parent identifies himself with the infant child, into which he has been typically transformed. The explanation given by Prof. Douglas of the Couvade as practised by the aborigines in the Chinese province of Kwei-chow agrees with that view. He states that the father goes to bed with the infant for a month, 'the idea being that the life of the father and child is one, and that any harm happening to the father will affect injuriously the well-being of the infant'."

Thus we see that the Couvade was practised by tribes represented then as backward in civilization, and in modern times by savages in many widely separated countries. This curious custom has been found at all times in many parts of the world, and in countries so distant from one another as to preclude the idea of imitation; hence it seems that, however absurd the custom may appear, yet there must be a sentiment in human nature, at some stage of its development, of which it is the outcome.

The daily life routine of a present day savage is regulated by many strange customs, which, however foolish they may appear to us, are regarded by the practiser as of vital importance to his own welfare; and these customs are in reality but the sterile or growth-arrested germs which, under more favourable conditions, have in civilized communities evolved into highly complicated legal and religious codes.

Finally the practice of the Couvade may be accounted for, partly on the idea of the child belonging exclusively to the father, and partly on the want of distinction in the savage mind between objective and subjective relations, whilst it has been also suggested that the malignant demons plotting against mother and child were considered to be tricked in this substitution of the man for the woman; but C. Tomlinson, F.R.S., suggests that such a practice "could not have originated in the motives above referred to, but rather in the necessities of humanity in the early history of the race, when the man shared

with the woman the exhausting function of suckling the child. From long disuse, the lacteal organ has become rudimentary in men generally, but occasionally exceptions are to be met with." He then enumerates many instances, both with regard to tribes and to individuals, and states that on submitting to a physiologist the question whether at some remote period of the history of the human race man did not share with woman the task of suckling the infant, he was referred to Darwin's *Descent of Man* (chap. vi., 2nd ed.), in which this subject is treated at length, and to which the reader is also referred.

A most interesting Paper on "Lactation," by John Knott, M.D., M.R.C.P.I., &c., has lately appeared in the *Medical Press*, vol. cxix., pp. 578–580, 608–610.

Classic antiquity presents instances of nations tracing their descent through the female line only. For examples, Herodotus (Clio, clxxiii) states that the Lycians "have one distinction from which they never deviate, which is peculiar to themselves; they take their names from their mothers, and not from their fathers. If anyone is asked concerning his family, he proceeds immediately to give an account of his descent, mentioning the female branches only."

Over the different companies into which the Cretans were divided, a woman presided who had the care and management of the whole family: this female government arose from their pretended descent from Thetis.

According to Plutarch, Bellerophon slew a wild boar which had destroyed the cattle and crops of the Xanthians, but who nevertheless gave him no reward for the exploit. He thereupon prayed Neptune to blight their crops, which the god did, until moved by the supplications of the female population, Bellerophon prayed a second time to Neptune to remove the curse. To commemorate this a law was enacted amongst the Xanthians, that they should take their names from their mothers and not from their fathers. The story is, however, evidently invented to account for the peculiarity of having descent reckoned through females only.

The old-world idea of pollution through contact with women is neatly ridiculed in the reply of Theano, wife of Pythagoras, to a person who inquired of her what time was required for a woman to become pure:—"She is pure immediately if the man be her husband; but if he be not her husband, no time will make her so."

A very common superstition is that a marriage lacks validity unless solemnized with a gold ring. In a small country town, in the south of Ireland, a local jeweller used to keep a few wedding rings for hire, and when couples, who were too poor to purchase

one of the necessary precious metal, were about to be married, they procured, for a small sum, the temporary loan of a ring, it being returned to the jeweller immediately after completion of the marriage ceremony. In very poor localities it is customary for the same gold ring to do duty for many marriages, for which purpose it is placed in the custody of some fairly comfortably circumstanced individual.

It is regarded as most unlucky if the wedding ring slips off the finger of the newly married wife either through accident or carelessness; another superstition is that when a wedding ring has worn so thin as to break in two, the woman or the husband will die, that the wedding ring and married life wear away *pari passu.* "Perhaps, we have here an answer to the often-asked question of modern days, 'Why do ladies encumber themselves with such heavy wedding rings?' Another common notion is, that if a wife should be unfortunate enough to break her wedding ring, she will shortly lose her husband."

The wedding ring is, it is stated, worn on the fourth finger, in accordance with a very ancient but erroneous belief that an artery ran direct from this finger to the heart. "This," Wheatly says, "is now contradicted by experience, but several eminent authors, as well Gentiles as Christians, as well physicians as divines, were formerly of this opinion, and therefore they thought this finger the properest to bear the pledge of love, that, from thence, it might be conveyed, as it were, to the heart."

According to the old proverb:—

> "As your wedding-ring wears,
> Your cares will wear away."

CHAPTER III.

WELL WORSHIP AND ITS CONCOMITANTS.

Holy Wells divided into three classes—Are still very numerous—Illustrations of the Process by which Christian Observances were, both in ancient and modern times, accommodated to heathen superstitions—The *Desiul*, or Holy Round—as practised in Ireland—in ancient and in modern times—amongst the Greeks and Romans—in the Tyrol—in Portugal—by Irish Bishops—The *Tuapholl*, Maledictive or Cursing Round—in Ireland—in Scandinavia—Ceremonial employed in anathematizing enemies—The Private Curse—The Public Curse—Enumeration of all known Cursing Stones and Cursing Altars—How the Curse may be averted—Some Sacred Stones still believed to contain the Spirits of Ancestors—They propagate their Species—Were invoked for good as well as for evil purposes—Were employed to cure Diseases—Straining Strings—Amulets and Charms—Strings, shreds, rags, hair, &c., tied on Bushes, &c., around Holy Wells—Their signification—Accounts of Wells in various parts of Ireland—Altars and Wells decorated with Fruit and Flowers—Wind Wells—Sacred Fish—Salmon—Trout—Eels—Well-worship and its concomitants, believed, by some, to be of Eastern origin—Conclusions to be drawn.

Holy Wells in Ireland may be roughly divided into three classes, namely, those which derive their reputed virtues from pagan superstition, where even yet

> "The nimble-footed fairies dance their rounds,
> By the pale moonshine, dipping oftentimes
> Their stolen children, so to make them free,
> From dying flesh and dull mortality."

Secondly, springs that were transferred from pagan to so-called Christian uses; and thirdly, a few which may lay claim to a merely Christian origin.

In the alleged ecclesiastical canons of Edgar it is ordered "that every priest forbid well-worshippings, &c.," and heathenism is very properly defined as the worship of idols, the sun or moon, fire, or rivers, water-wells, stones, and forest trees.

Although many holy wells have now, in a greater or less degree, lost their sacred character, they are still numerous; probably there are not less than three thousand throughout Ireland. Holy wells are resorted to for purposes of prayer, or for the performing of certain penances—either voluntary or imposed—evidently a survival of the old heathen adoration of "water-wells." In many Irish MS. there are allusions to this pre-Christian worship; for example, Tirehan relates that St. Patrick, in his progress through Ireland, came to a fountain called Slaun, to which the Druids offered sacrifices, and which they worshipped as a God; and in Adamnan's *Life of St. Columkille* it is recounted that this saint, when in the country of the Picts, heard of a notable fountain to which the pagans paid divine honour.

Illustrations of the process by which Christian observances were, in ancient times, accommodated to heathen superstitions and customs, are, in modern times, to be also found, nearly everywhere, smoothing the work of the missionary. In China and Japan the paraphernalia of Buddhism have proved most convenient; temples, shrines, altars, bells, holy-water vessels, censers, rosaries, vestments, are all ready at hand for transfer from one set of priests, and from one religion to the other. Images of Buddha, with a slight application of the chisel, are transformed into images of Christ, and the roadside shrines of the goddess of mercy are easily metamorphosed into shrines of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In Ceylon, devil dancers, from the temples of Siva, accompany the processions alike of heathen gods and of those of Christ and of Christian saints. In the same chapel, images of Buddha are placed opposite images of the Virgin, and apparently receive equal adoration, whilst a mingled throng of Hindoos, Buddhists, and Christians pay their vows together at the shrines of St. Anna, by whom miracles are believed to have been wrought. With the process here visible before us, we can see how heathen customs and ideas, in both early and modern times, would be planted and cultivated in popular Christian usage. On this principle the pagan Pantheon, or "Temple of all the Gods," at Rome, became the Christian "Church of all the Saints," and, in Ireland, the first expounders of the New Faith accommodated their teaching to pre-existing observances, tolerated, or even encouraged the continuance of long established institutions, conciliated popular prejudice, converted pagan into Christian festivals, and consecrated to the service of the new God, localities, objects, and days which had been previously dedicated to an older worship. This is no new thing, but the mere repetition of an old story. It is stated that in ancient Phœnicia there are grottoes dedicated to the Virgin Mary, but which were evidently, in ancient times, shrines of Astarte, for they still bear

the symbols of the ancient worship of Canaan. The order of the Jewish local sanctuaries, and the religious feasts celebrated at them had much in common with the idolatry of the land; indeed many of the "high places" were old Canaanite sanctuaries. The Israelites, like many worshippers of the Christian God, fell into a state of syncretism, and were unable to distinguish between local worship and the worship of a One and universal God. The service of many modern shrines is, to a non-theologically trained mind, almost indistinguishable from polytheism, of which, some writers allege that it is the historical continuation.

There is a very remarkable and apposite passage bearing on this aspect of the introduction of Christianity into the British Isles, in the instructions given to St. Augustine. He was counselled not to destroy the temples of the Britons, but to consecrate them to the service of Christianity; not, in fact, to interfere in any way with firmly established customs; his course of action in these matters was thus laid down:—"It is said to be the custom of the men of this nation to sacrifice oxen. This custom must be changed into a Christian solemnity, and on the days of the dedication of their temples, turned into churches, as well as of the feasts of the saints, whose relics shall be there deposited; they shall be allowed, as formerly, to build their huts of boughs round these same churches, to assemble there, and to bring their animals, which shall be killed by them, no longer as offerings to the devil, but as Christian banquets in the name, and to the praise of God, to whom they shall render thanks when they have satisfied their hunger. By reserving something for men's outward joy, you will the more easily lead them to relish internal joy."

An American reviewer while contesting facts and traversing arguments similar to the foregoing, in reality gives away the position, for he says that the writer "evidently understands neither the Catholic missionary priest, nor the Catholic people in his treatment of paganism becoming absorbed by Christianity. Not in Ireland only, but in all lands, the early preachers were willing to allow to the people whatever was harmless in their pagan customs, or even to use these customs, the very religious ones, too, by transformation into Christian rites. Rome witnessed this in early Christian days, and America, wherever a Jesuit, a Franciscan, or a Dominican, brought the Cross of Redemption." If we accept these premisses, it follows, as an inevitable corollary, that modern Christianity is, in fact, the reintegration of many old religious ideas, by the absorption on the part of the Church, of numerous pagan usages. Like Pagan Rome, Christian Rome adopted most of the gods that came in its way, and constituted them into a numerous array of saints, so

that every member of the Church is bound in principle to say that he is

> "\. . . . . intolerant to none,
> Whatever shape the pious rite may bear,
> E'en the poor pagan's homage to the sun
> I would not harshly scorn, lest even there
> I spurn'd some elements of Christian prayer."

The holy spring, still supposed to effect the cure of disease, is a material outcome of, as well as a connecting link in, the chain of primitive customs and thoughts thereby engendered, extending from pagan times. The past thus stands side by side with the present. A railway in the South of Ireland runs directly over a holy well. At the foot of the embankment is a small and forbidding pool, fed by a never-failing spring; here, while trains thunder by overhead to catch the mail-boat for England, country people drink of the sacred water, pray for release from their afflictions, and hang their rags on the tree beside the well. In early days enthusiastic missionaries sought to wean the natives from paganism by admitting such of their existing customs as, from the then Christian standpoint, appeared harmless: just as the before-cited American critic admits is the case in times comparatively modern. From all this it follows that if we subtract what appears to be the result of distinctly mediæval Christianity from the ordinary so-called superstitions of the peasantry, the residuum is pure paganism.

To the Irish peasant wells were the haunts of spirits that proved propitious if remembered, but vindictive if neglected; hence no devotee approached the sacred precincts empty-handed, the principle being "no gift no cure"; therefore the modern devotee when tying up a fragment torn from the clothing, or dropping a cake, a small coin, or a crooked pin into the well, is unconsciously worshipping the old presiding pagan genii of the place. It is still thought that if you dream of one of these holy wells the spirit of the well is propitious, and it is a good omen; if the waters appear clear it is a favourable sign, but if muddy it denotes accruing vexations and troubles.

The same transformation scene which we have described in Ireland took place also in Britain. A money offering having been left at the shrine erected for the purpose, the Cornish folk might visit their springs and offer pins or pebbles to the imaginary divinity, or draw what conclusions they pleased from the bubbles which rose on the water as they stamped on the ground at the side, but St. Hilda had no favour to bestow on anyone who stooped at the brink of her fountain without a gift. The sick girl, or youth, who had performed all due ablutions, and had gone through

all the necessary ceremonials, before drinking of the well of St. Tegh, in Denbighshire, would never make the malady of which they suffered, pass into the fowl, which they held under their arms, unless the necessary fee had been previously deposited in the shrine. St. Keyne would ignore either bride or bridegroom who ran to win mastery at home by being the first to quaff at her spring, unless their footing had been previously paid. On one occasion, after a wedding in the parish church, situated not far from the well (fig. 9), the bridegroom rushed out of the building, and returned heated from exertion, but smiling, and was met by his equally smiling bride. The result is thus narrated by the disappointed husband to an inquiring stranger :—

> " 'You drank of the well, I warrant, betimes?'
> He to the countryman said:
> But the countryman smiled as the stranger spoke,
> And sheepishly shook his head.
>
> " 'I hasten'd as soon as the wedding was done,
> And left my wife in the porch:
> But, i' faith, she had been wiser than I;
> For she took a bottle to church.' "

When Seneca said, " where a spring rises, or a river flows, there should we build altars and make sacrifices," he but expressed a popular article of faith of the old but dying religion, which was adopted by the then lately born and fiercely persecuted new religion. Seneca, whom St. Jerome respected, thus unites the sentiments of the two eras; in fact, he was even claimed as a Christian and was placed among the saints by the Fathers of the early Christian Church, and the genuineness of a spurious correspondence between him and the Apostle Paul has been gravely maintained in our own times by some writers, though it is obvious that the letters, as we possess them, are worthless forgeries.

There is a distinct line of demarcation between the greater divinities of the Irish pantheon, and the crowd of minor divinities who never rose above being *genii locorum*, the spirits of particular trees, rocks, lakes, rivers, and springs converted into holy wells and adopted in the most wholesale manner into Christianity. St. Columbkille alone is said to have " sained three hundred wellsprings that were swift." Well worship prevails, not in Ireland alone, but, it may be almost said, in every county, or shire, in the United Kingdom. It evidently did not originate in the blessing of wells by early saints and thus spread downwards, until it became almost, if not quite, universal; on the contrary, it began from the people, who were being christianized, and thence permeated the entire system of Irish Christianity.

A curious remnant of Paganism may be seen in the manner in which a peasant always approaches these holy localities. This must be from the north side, and he must move from east to west, in imitation of the diurnal motion of the sun. Similarly a corpse should be carried to its last resting-place, a bride approach her husband, an infant be carried to the baptismal font, and the glass be circulated round the festive board in the same manner;

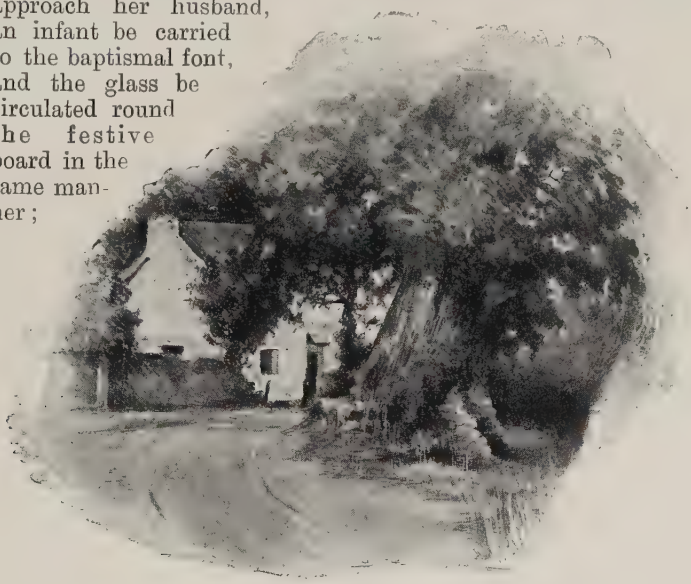

Fig. 9.

Site of St. Keyne's Well, Cornwall. From the *Royal Magazine*.

hence the proverb: *Cuir an gloine thart fa dheas, i. e.* send round the glass to the south, such being the right or lucky way, the opposite being the wrong or unlucky way. It was also the custom of the gods, for Homer describes Vulcan as filling a bumper to his mother Juno:—

> Αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖς ἄλλοισι θεοῖς ἐνδέξια πᾶσιν
> Οἰνοχόει, γλυχὺ νέχταρ ἀπὸ κρητῆρος ἀφύσσων.

The hands of clocks and watches turn from east to west like the sun; we deal round playing cards in the same fashion: thus is ancient thought found crystallized in modern custom.

Mr. F. T. Elworthy recounts that, in Somerset, quite recently, and within his own knowledge, "a number of children were brought to be baptized, and, of course, were ranged in a group round the font. The officiating minister, not being accustomed

to such a number, or not knowing the custom, began with the child on his right hand, of course following on in order, and going round to the child on his left. This action caused great indignation: parents, who had never before seen the importance of having their children baptized at all, were quite sure that now they had not been done properly, and must be taken to another church, 'to be done over again.' Thus it was held of far greater moment that the parson should proceed from left to right than it was that the children should be baptized or not."

To the south of the old church of Carran, county Clare, there is a small carn, around which the corpse is carried before burial in the churchyard; and the writer has seen coffins, whilst on the way to the cemetery, carried desiul-wise around the cross at Monkstown, county Dublin.

Martin describes the custom as existing in the Hebrides, and the following are his experiences in the matter of the *desiul** or sun-wise round:—"Some are very careful, when they set out to sea, that the boat be first rowed about sunways; and if this be neglected they are afraid their voyage may prove unfortunate. I had this ceremony paid me (when in the Island of Illa) by a poor woman after I had given her an alms. I desired her to let alone that compliment, for I did not care for it; but she insisted to make these three ordinary turns, and prayed that God and Mac Charmaig, the patron saint of that island, might bless and prosper me in all my designs and affairs. I attempted twice to go from Illa to Colonsay, and at both times they rowed about the boat sunways, though I forbid them to do it; and by a contrary wind the boat and those in it were forced back. I took boat again a third time from Jura to Collonsay, and at the same time forbid them to row about their boat, which they obeyed, and then we landed safely at Collonsay without any ill adventure, which some of the crew did not believe possible for want of the round." Formerly when starting on fishing expeditions the crews of Irish boats were very careful that their craft should leave the shore in a direction sunways, and even yet this superstition directs the course of many a fishing boat, in Ireland, as well as Scotland, when being put to sea.

In connection with events of moment, the necessity for turning sunways was felt to be specially binding; but even in matters of no particular importance the rule was held to apply. In the

* In Moray, Scotland, the natives cut the finger- and toe-nails of the patient suffering from consumptive diseases, wrap the parings in a rag torn from his clothes, "then wave their hand with the rag thrice round his head, crying: *Deas Soil* (*desiul*); after which the rag is buried in some unknown place. This is a practice similar to that recorded by Pliny, as practised by the magicians and druids of his time."

Vision of Mac Conglinne, the hero when parting from his tutor went right-hand wise round the cemetery, *dollind desel relce*. In *Cormac's Glossary* the spirit of poetry is stated to have met Senchán Torpeist, "and then he goes sunwise (*desiul*) round Senchán and his people."

If the mumps were rife, afflicted children were led with a halter hanging about their necks before sunrise to a south-running (*desiul*) stream. Many pains and penalties are incurred, should they break silence during the ceremony.

In Gerald Griffin's novel, *The Colleen Bawn*, the writer, who describes his countrymen from real life, alludes to the ritual of the *desiul*, or lucky round, then rife in many parts where it has now died out, and recounts how a child, in compliance with popular superstition, was christened "North East." Three infants having died, the unlucky parents imagined that, if the last arrival were baptized "North East," the curse would be removed from their household.

In "Waverley" Sir Walter Scott describes how the old Highlander, called in to attend the wounded Edward, walked round the patient three times, from east to west, according to the course of the sun; and this ceremony was considered a matter of the utmost importance towards effecting a cure.

From left to right has ever been the processional order; to go to the right is tantamount to a malediction, and is called in English "withershins," or "widdershins," from the Saxon *widher*, against. Implicit belief in the efficacy of the desiul was, at one time, rife throughout Ireland. Allusion to this ceremony is made by Dr. P. W. Joyce, who states that Tempo in Fermanagh, "is called in Irish *an t-Iompodh deisiol* (an timpo deshil), *iompodh* meaning turning, and *deisiol*, dextrosum, from left to right. The place received its name, no doubt, from the ancient custom of turning sunways, *i.e.* from left to right, in worship."

At the battle of Cooldrumman, fought near Drumcliff, county Sligo, in the year 561, St. Columbkille, in his prayer before the contest, denounces his adversaries for employing pagan rites to assure victory, and anathematizes :—

> " . . the host which has taken judgment from us,
> A host that marches round a carn "—

i.e. performs the desiul. By the strange irony of fate the saint's manuscript of portion of the Holy Scriptures—the origin of the conflict, hence styled the *Cathach*, or "book of the battle"—became the battle-standard of his tribe, the *Cinel Conaill*; and an old Irish MS. recounts that before a fight "it was proper the *Cathach* should be carried round the army"; and, further, that

if "carried three times to the right around the army of the *Cinel Conaill* at going to battle, it was certain they would return victorious."

The desiul was an act of worship also among the Greeks and Romans; classical and gentile antiquity abounding with evidence of some kind of rotation forming, in them, part of the ceremonial of religious worship.

Hyginus relates that Arge, a huntress, while pursuing a stag, said:—"Although thou followest the course of the sun, yet will I follow thee," at which the sun, being displeased, changed her into a doe. Arge's offence appears to have been that she referred in a profane manner to the desiul, or act of solar adoration. Although the Latin proverb, *adversus solem ne loquitor* (speak not against the sun), is generally understood in the sense that one should not argue against that which is as clear as the sun shining at mid-day, it is nevertheless quite possible that the adage may originally have had also reference to a caution against making disparaging remarks against sun-worship, or the observance of the desiul.

Plutarch remarks, that "the turning round in adoration is said to represent the circular motion of the world." He also relates that Marcellus, when leading the Roman legions against the Gauls, "his horse, terrified with the shouts of the Gauls, turned short, and forcibly carried him back. Marcellus fearing that this, interpreted by superstition, would cause some wonder in his troops, quickly pulled the rein, and, turning his horse again towards the enemy, paid his adorations to the sun, as if that movement had been made, not by accident, but design; for the Romans always turn round when they worship the gods." Camden relates that, in his day, when an Irishman happened to fall, he immediately, upon rising, turned three times to the right, then, with his sword or knife, dug the soil, cutting a sod from it; this latter part of the ceremony seems to imply belief in an earth spirit.

When it became customary to pay divine honours to the Cæsars, they were approached with veiled head, the suppliant turning round, and then prostrating himself. The most apposite quotation that can be advanced is one from Lucretius, which may be thus translated:—

> "Call it not Piety that oft you're found
> Veiled, at the standing-stone to make your round."

In a comedy by Plautus, one of his characters says:—"Which way to turn myself I know not"; the other jestingly replies, "If you worship the gods, right-hand wise, I apprehend;"

whilst Valerius Flaccus, in describing a marriage ceremony, relates that :—

> "Pollux advanced the nuptial torches' ray,
> And ritual water, while in holy round,
> Right-hand-ways they together tread the ground."

With the Romans, if a corpse had not obtained sepulchral rites, the poor, shivering, homeless ghost, generally appalled some near relative by its ghastly presence, entreating him, to collect, if possible, its mortal remains (see vol. i., p. 242), burn them, then move three times sunwise round the pyre, and pronounce the farewell prayer, or charm, which permitted the unhappy shade to cross over in Charon's barge and enjoy the, very questionable, comforts of Elysium.

The old heathen custom of the desiul survives in the most unlooked-for places, and amongst the most unlikely people. In 1809, in the struggle entered upon by the Tyrolese for the independence of their country, the patriot Hofer was foiled in two attempts to capture Innsbruck, the capital of the Tyrol. At a council of war even the patriot appeared irresolute, until a grey-haired peasant stood up, and thus addressed him :—"Attack the enemy once more ; but make a vow, that if the attack succeeds, thou and thy people, and all the members of right-thinking parishes (communes), will yearly, on this day, hold an office, and walk round the churchyard three times, according to the peasant custom. Then shall all go well." This was regarded as a prophetic utterance ; the attack was delivered and was successful.

The old pagan custom of the desiul, universally practised in Ireland around wells, churches, and rude stone monuments, is found also in Portugal, where cattle, in order that they may escape the murrain, are taken sun-wise round some favourite shrine.

W. C. Borlace remarks that "Irish bishops, as they call themselves, on their travels, were popularly supposed to be infected with this demonstrative form of heresy," that is, performing the desiul, or moving sunways, or right-hand ways, round some venerated object. "Poor Saint Rudbert, although of royal Frankish stock, mixed with the blood of Irish chieftains, had to put up with derision from the vulgar crowd, who, not content with laughing at his ignorance of their language, were accustomed to look upon all Scotic pilgrims, as 'deceptores, gyrovagi, et cursores,'" which may be paraphrased, "cheats, dancing dervishes, and running lackeys."

If the Irish peasant wishes to curse his enemy, he proceeds, *tuapholl*, *i. e.* "withershins," or "widdershins," *i. e.* in the reverse order from desiul ; and the reversal of all ceremonies

at a military funeral may, possibly, be a remnant of this custom of "withershins," or the unlucky way. The following lines from an old Scottish ballad, as quoted by W. F. Wakeman, demonstrate that the unholy turn, "withershins" or "widdershins," as it is here spelled, was considered as unfortunate on sea as it was ashore—

> "The stormy winds did loudly blaw,
> The raging waves did flout,
> An' my love, an' his bonnie ship
> Turned widdershins about."

Widdershins or withershins, which may be paraphrased as "contrariwise," perhaps points to a step in the struggle between Christianity and Paganism, when, having obtained the upper hand, the former seated herself in her adversary's place, and appropriated the most paying tricks of her opponent. Then to do anything opposed to the Church was to make oneself an enemy of the Church; to go the holy round against the Church-way (*i.e.* the adopted pagan way) was to indulge in magic: in later times the same train of reasoning originated the idea that the devil appeared to anyone who recited the Paternoster backward.

Toland, in his *History of the Druids*, written in 1718, thus describes the two ceremonial rounds:—"The vulgar . . . never come to the ancient and fire-hallowing carns, but they walk round them from east to west, according to the course of the sun. This sanctified tour, or round by the south is called *deiseal* (dextrorsum), as was the unhallowed contrary one by *tuapholl* (sinistrorsum), *i.e.* left-hand-wise"; this latter was *geis*, i. e. unorthodox, or, as O'Donovan defines the expression, a thing or act forbidden, because of the ill-luck which would result from its doing. *Geis* also means a charm or spell. In the old written legends it signifies an injunction, a prohibition, a "taboo"; people were often put under *geis* to observe, or refrain from, certain things, acts, or lines of conduct, the obligation being either taken voluntarily or imposed on them by others. Even to look left-hand-ways was considered unlucky. In the *Book of Lecan* there is a reference to the famous fair of Teltown in Meath; and it is stated that there were three prohibitions (*geis*) laid on anyone visiting the locality: one being that the visitor was not to look at it "over the left shoulder."

The Norsemen held the same idea as the Irish regarding the *tuapholl*, or unholy ground. In *Grettis Saga* a witch is described as having "walked backwards around the (tree) stump, in the opposite direction of the sun's course, and pronounced many powerful incantations thereover." In *Hoensa Thoris Saga* a warrior, "pulled a rafter of birch-wood out of the (burning)

house, and then rode against the sun (from west to east) round the houses with the burning brand." In the *Eyrbyggja* an apparition is described as moving "backward, through the room, against the course of the sun."

Perhaps one of the oldest written Irish accounts of the *tuapholl* occurs in the *Book of Ballymote*, where it is recorded that a king of Leinster had a magical well in his garden, to which no one, save the monarch and his three cup-bearers, could approach without being instantly deprived of sight. The queen, determined to test the mystical powers of its waters, not only approached the well, but passed three times round it to the left, or "withershins," as was customary in malific incantations. Upon the completion of the third round the spring burst forth in a raging torrent, and three enormous waves dashed over the hapless queen, who was thus carried right out to the ocean.

The *desiul* and *tuapholl* rounds formed apparently portion of the inauguration-ceremony of an Irish chief; for Spenser, in his *View of Ireland*, after describing the ritual, states that, when it was concluded, the newly-created chief descended from the stone on which he had been inaugurated, and "turned himself round thrice forward and thrice backward."

In ancient times, particularly in the East, imprecations were supposed to possess extraordinary power. The curse of a father was believed to be especially fatal, for it was thought that the gods were always ready to execute the imprecations of parents upon disobedient children.

There still exists a survival of a remarkable ceremonial employed by the ancient Irish for anathematising their enemies, which apparently may be sometimes employed unconnected with holy wells or sacred localities, and which, for convenience, we may designate "the private curse." The poet Spenser had intended to treat "more at large" of the semi-pagan social customs of the Irish, amongst others, that of their manner of cursing; and it is to be regretted that he never carried this idea into execution. O'Donovan thus defines the effect of a well-delivered curse:—"The belief among the ancient Irish was, and still is, that a curse, once pronounced, must fall in some direction. If it has been deserved by him on whom it is pronounced, it will fall upon him, sooner or later, but, if it has not, then it will return upon the person who pronounced it. They compare it to a wedge with which a woodman cleaveth timber. If it has room to go, it will go, and cleave the wood; but if it has not, it will fly out and strike the woodman himself, who is driving it, between the eyes."

The Irish peasants believe that a curse must fall on something; if it does not descend on the person on whom it is evoked, it will

remain for seven years in the air, ready to alight on the head of the individual who provoked the malediction. It hovers over him like a hawk over its quarry, watching its opportunity, and if his guardian spirit abandons him, but for an instant, it swoops instantly on his head, showing itself immediately in the loss of wealth, health, or of life. The peasantry, however, believe that the blessing of one person may cancel, or at least mitigate, the curse of another (see vol. i., p. 275), but this opinion does not affect the theory of a "well-delivered anathema."

There is an ancient, homely proverb, that "curses, like chickens, come home to roost"; and the dread of retribution of this nature inspires such an amount of awe, as to prevent rash anathemas. An Irish proverb, which conveys the idea that curses are apt to fall on the person who has rashly uttered them, is as follows:—*Fa bhun chrainn a cuiteas a duilleabhar, i. e.* it is at the foot of the tree the leaves fall. If we are to judge by Proverbs xxvi. 2, the Jews seem to have been imbued with much the same idea:—"As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come."

A peculiar pagan manner of cursing, though now rapidly dying out, prevailed at one time amongst the Irish-speaking population. The primitive, simple, and original ceremony, styled the "Fire of Stones," is of "the private curse" type. The individual, desirous of cursing his enemy, collects as many water-worn stones as will cover the hearth-stone of his cottage; these he piles up as he would arrange turf for making a fire. Then dropping on his knees, he prays that, until the heap before him burns, every description of misfortune may befall his enemy, and his enemy's family to untold generations. The stones are then carried out of the house, and scattered over the face of the country, being cast into places from which it would be difficult, or even impossible to recover them, such as bog-holes, pools, streams, lakes and rivers, each stone being thrown away with the imprecation that the curse may last until the entire series thus scattered to the four winds are again gathered together.

The rite of the "Fire of Stones" is grossly malevolent, but a very similar proceeding for merciful and healing purposes is as follows. A "herb-doctor," if called in to cure "the rose," as erysipelas is styled by the peasantry, will gather ten pebbles from a well or brook; one he at once throws back into the water, the other nine are carried to the patient's bedside. Having muttered spells over them, they are placed by the "doctor," one by one in a certain position. The affected part is then rubbed

with each stone in succession. The ceremony completed, the stones are carried to the stream or well, from which they had been taken and thrown in again, with the wish that the patient may never have "the rose" so long as the stones remain there ungathered.

These ceremonies resemble the formulæ of old, used in Orkney, to acquire the power of witchcraft. Provided with five oval-shaped and two flat stones, the postulant went to the sea-shore at midnight, turning on his way three times against the course of the sun. On arrival he lay down on his back, with arms and legs stretched out, his head to the south, and taking care that the place was situated between high and low water mark. He then placed one oval stone at either foot, a flat stone on his chest, another over his heart, and grasped an oval stone in either hand. Shutting his eyes he repeated a long incantation, devoting himself to the evil spirit of the locality, and remained silent and motionless for a prescribed period. Then opening his eyes he turned on his left side, rose and flung the stones, one by one, into the sea with certain stereotyped forms of maledictions and imprecations.

One example has been given of the "private curse." The following are examples of what may, for convenience, be designated the "public curse."

A number of oval or circular stones may be observed around the margins of holy wells, together with numerous white pebbles scattered over the bottom, whilst on some altars, overlooking the well, are numerous globular, oval, and occasionally curiously wrought stones. These possess maledictory properties; they were also used for swearing on, and are believed to be endowed with miraculous powers of healing sickness. The late Sir Samuel Ferguson thus alludes to what appears to be the primary object to which these articles are applied :—

> "They loosed their curse against the King,
> They cursed him in his flesh and bones,
> And ever in the mystic ring,
> They turned the maledictive stones."

There are two stones in the Joyce Country, Connemara, which, if anyone who is falsely maligned, turns, at the same time anathematising his maligner, the curse will take effect, and evil befall the false accuser. The turning of the "cursing stones" of Kilmoon, county Clare, twisted the mouths of the victims awry. Here there are a holy well, a sacred tree, and a pillar-stone, called "the cross."

In the graveyard of Killeany, in the same county, there is a remarkable altar, about ten feet square, on the top of which

are many rounded "cursing-stones." According to Mr. T. J. Westropp, M.A., there are no very definite traditions of the practice of "cursing" at other sites, at Ross, Kinallin, or Killowe, though in each case rounded stones lie upon the altars.

Fig. 10.

St. Bridget's Stone, Killinagh, near Blacklion. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

In a field near the graveyard of Foyoges, county Sligo, there is a "great long slate" which marks what is styled the "Bishop's grave." Formerly a considerable number of round stones were piled on the slab, and many still remain. Though

Fig. 11.

The Little Altar, with Stones, Island of Inishmurray. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

they be taken away, they are sure to be found the next morning in their usual place. According to a correspondent, "some are split by their having been employed in forming a fireplace." Can this have anything to say to "the fire of stones"?

Many years ago a young gentleman, who lived in the neighbourhood, took two of the stones to a bridge close by, where he hurled them on to the rocks in the bed of the stream beneath, and broke them in pieces. Next morning, however, the fragments were to be seen on the slab.

A young lady then determined to test the truth of the legend, and, accordingly, abstracted one of the stones, which she concealed in a box, despite which it reappeared three mornings in succession, after three futile attempts, in its former place. It is almost needless to explain that a servant in the house replaced it. The young lady, in after-life, had great bad luck, which, as a matter of course, was attributed to this attempted larceny of the sacred stones.

Near the shores of Lough Macnean, not far from the village of Blacklion in Fermanagh, is St. Bridget's Stone," a globular-

Fig. 12.

Clocha-breacha-Altar, with Cursing Stones, Island of Inishmurray.

shaped boulder, and its table-like surface displays nine cavities. Each of these depressions contains a stone, smooth and oval, which nearly fills the depression. Ceremonies of some description were formerly carried on about it, when it was commonly known as "the Cursing Stone" (fig. 10).

Upon the various altars (figs. 11–13) in the Island of Inishmurray, off the coast of Sligo, may be noticed collections of these globular stones, a few of them ornamented with what may be styled Early Greek Crosses enclosed by a circle. The most ornate of these symbols (see No. 1 of fig. 14) occurs on a stone, globular in shape, measuring fifteen and a half inches in diameter. No. 2, a stone on *Clocha-breacha*, in the form of a globe, measures eleven inches and a half in diameter. No. 3, on the same altar, is egg-shaped, its greatest diameter being ten and a half inches.

No. 4, exhibits a plain Greek cross enclosed by a circle, the diameter of which is five inches and a half, the design resembling crosses engraved on Coptic and Syrian churches of about the fifth century. No. 5, the smallest of the inscribed cursing stones of Inishmurray, also bears a Greek cross. The diameter of the circle by which the figure is encompassed is about five inches. Nos. 8, 9, and 10 represent average examples of the ordinary undecorated stones on the altars of Inishmurray, and also upon similar structures distributed over several districts of Ireland, principally in the west. They were, in all probability, rounded and smoothed by the action of water, or by friction with the

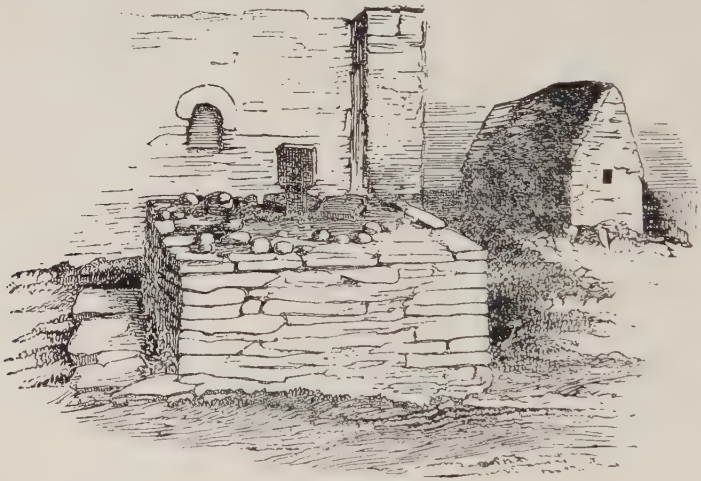

Fig. 13.

Eastern Altar, with Stones, Island of Inishmurray. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

sand or gravel of some sea or lake shore. In size some are no larger than a walnut, while others, in point of dimensions, might be compared to an ordinary beehive. No 8 is eight, No. 9 six inches in height. No. 6 is a block of sandstone, the upper portion shaped like a cube, while the lower presents the appearance of a shaft intended for insertion in some socket. The cube has been hollowed to some extent, and was furnished with a covering or stopper of stone, which completely fills the depression. There is no tradition in connection with this relic, but as its principal surfaces have been carved with a number of very early crosses, it was probably intended to serve some purposes in the ancient ritual of St. Molaise's establishment.

The stone is about two feet in length. No 7, another hollowed stone, furnished with a stopper, which also completely fills the

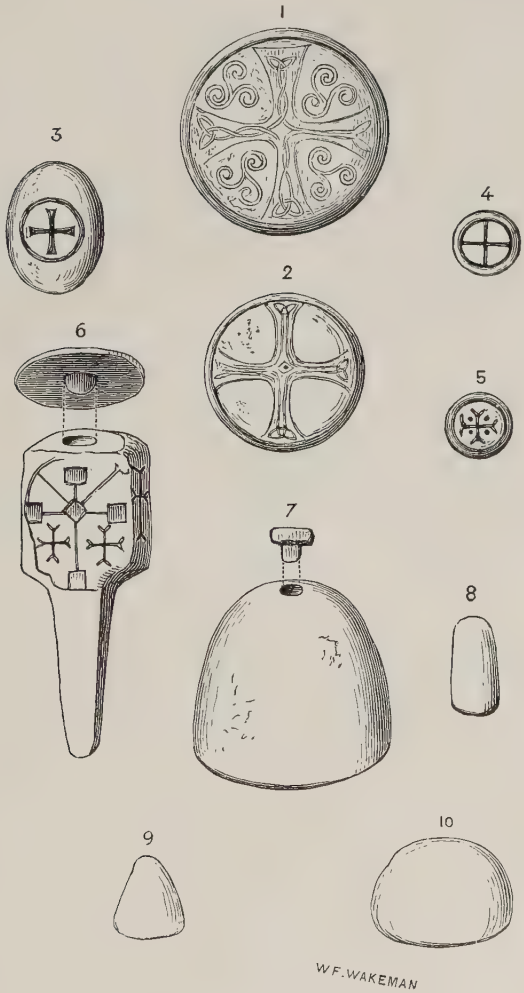

Fig. 14.

Cursing-Stones, &c., Island of Inishmurray.

depression, is a great puzzle to archæologists, as is also its fellow. No. 7 measures three feet ten inches in circumference. (For the

writer's theory on the subject of its original use, see p. 68.) Although Nos. 6 and 7 were undoubtedly, at one time, used for Christian rites, in their origin, they were most probably previously employed for pagan purposes.

The stones on the altar of *Clocha-breacha* are arranged in such a manner as to render it difficult to reckon them; indeed, according to the statement of the natives, they can never be correctly counted. These cursing stones are still in great repute. In the year 1886, during the anti-Protestant riots in the town of Sligo, an aged countrywoman was heard to threaten that she would go to the Island and "turn the stones against the Protestants." In another instance a countryman after the recitation of a story, which his auditors did not appear to implicitly believe, asseverated that it was true, and "that it was so, to the stones be it said."

Fig. 15.

Fig. 16.

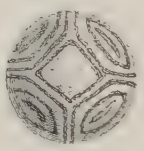

Fig. 17.

Fig. 15.—Altar Stone from Trummery Church, County Antrim. From the Catalogue of the Museum, R.I.A.

Fig. 16.—Altar Stone in the collection R.I.A. From the Catalogue of the Museum, R.I.A.

Fig. 17.—Altar Stone in the collection R.I.A. From the Catalogue of the Museum, R.I.A.

Fig. 15, from Trummery Church, county Antrim, 4½ inches long, and about 2 inches thick, has on one side, four indentations somewhat resembling finger-marks, and upon the other a cross. Fig. 16, 4 inches long, is peculiarly ornamented on one side only. Fig. 17 is decorated with an irregular pattern. On the obverse it bears the figure of a cross.

In the townland of Ballysummaghan, and in that of Barroe, in the county Sligo, there were originally stones also used for the purpose of cursing. The ceremony appears to have closely resembled that observed on the Island of Inishmurray; but, in addition, the postulant was required to go through the ritual, bare-footed and bare-headed. One mode of averting the curse was for the person against whom "the stones were turned" to have a grave dug, to cause himself to be laid in it, and to have

three shovelfuls of earth cast over him, the grave-diggers at the same time reciting certain rhymes.

This custom of burying the patient was a rite commonly employed in olden days as a cure for insanity or to ward off ill-luck. Although it saved the person's life, he lost his reason, either temporarily or permanently. The terrible ordeal consisted in burying the unfortunate patient for three days and three nights, only his head being left uncovered. During this entire time he was allowed no food, no one was permitted to speak to him—silence being strictly enforced during all heathen ceremonies, otherwise the spells were of no avail. If the patient survived this treatment he was disinterred, generally more mad after than before his burial.*

In the case of a child born at Whitsuntide—that most ill-omened time for anyone to arrive in this world—a grave is dug, the infant laid in it, but only for a short time, and the evil hanging over the babe is thus averted.

The stones at Ballysummaghan, originally seven in number, were styled "the Summaghan Stones." They are said to have been cast into the neighbouring lake, yet were found next morning in their accustomed places. About two miles distant from the foregoing site, in Barroe, near Bloomfield, there was a similar set of stones. Under the shade of some ash-trees is the dried-up site of a holy well; for, owing to its profanation by unbelievers in its sanctity, the waters left it, and broke out in another spot. Both here and at Ballysummaghan the stones have now disappeared. The two cursing sites seem to have been the special heritage of the Summaghan family. It is recounted that the last victims were members of the sept. The O'Summaghan missed a firkin of butter, and accused one of his neighbours of the larceny, which was stoutly denied. O'Summaghan then "performed stations" at Barroe and at Ballysummaghan, but with an unexpected result. His wife and son both died, for it was his wife who, being in debt, unknown to the husband, had, with the aid of her son, abstracted the firkin of butter, conveyed it into Sligo, and sold it to pay her bills.

Near Castle Kirk, not far from Lough Corrib, behind the rock that shelters the church and glebe from the north, a spring pours into a natural rock basin. Close by lay an oval-shaped flagstone, called "St. Fechin's Stone," the "touchstone and terror" to all evil-doers for miles around: for, whoever was accused or suspected of a crime was "dared to the Leac-na-Fechin, or voluntarily underwent the ordeal of turning the flag, with certain attendant

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* For other examples of this grave-digging ceremony, *Early Races of Scotland* and Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials* may be consulted.

rites and incantations." There was a guardian of the stone, who instructed postulants in the mysteries of the procedure.

Dr. Maziere Brady, in his *Records of Cork, Cloyne and Ross*, mentions a sacred stone to which great veneration was paid, and on which the country folk took solemn oaths.

In the island of Iniskea, adjoining that of Achill, there used to be, and probably there still is, a cursing stone at the mouth of a holy well. Anybody who wanted the immediate gratification of vengeance must go to the stone, "turn it round three times, and pray that his enemies might not prosper or get length of life; and their means would melt away like snow before the sun; their days would be shortened till in the end they would get a miserable death; in fact it is a stone that would put an end to bad people in a short time."

Close to the old castle of Rinville, near Salrock Harbour, is a holy well held in great veneration called Tobar na Seacht n-Inghean, *i.e.* "the well of the seven daughters", where the people perform their devotions. Here they formerly had a stone called Leac na Seacht n-Inghean, *i.e.* "the flagstone of the seven daughters," which was used as a cursing-stone. Unfortunately, no legend throws light on the origin of these seven amiable women.*

On the island of Iniskill, near Port Noo, in Donegal, remarks W. C. Borlace, "I saw a very similar stone (to that at Djidjeli, in Algeria) placed with many others on the upper surface of a large, square, natural block, much reverenced by the pilgrims who periodically visit the place in the summer months. It was a boulder, about 18 inches long, which had been rolled into its present shape (that of a long egg, pointed at either end) by the action of the sea; the material being dark slate, traversed by four bands of quartz. The pilgrims, lifting it off the rock, pass it round their bodies, repeating prayers or curses, just such a practice as Strabo mentions in the case of the stones at Cape St. Vincent, the sacred Promontory of Portugal."

Cursing-stones are by no means confined to Ireland. There is a cursing-well at St. Elian, about two miles from Colwyn Bay, in Wales. By placing the initials of the names of the individual to whom evil is desired upon a pebble, and then dropping it into the water, some great calamity or sudden death is ensured to the person thus pointed out to the spirit of the spring. Not long ago vindictive people from all parts of the Principality went to St. Elian's to put those they hated under the ban of the saint,

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* A description of the cursing stone on Caher Island, and an account of the ceremony of "turning the anvil" are given under the heading of "Wind Wells." (See pp. 104–108.)

and the dread entertained of this proceeding was almost beyond belief. There was a custodian of the spring, and it formed part of his occupation to search for pebbles bearing the initials of any one who wished to be relieved from the curse, or "taken out of the well," as it was called. The custodian of the well also advised the persons, so unfortunate as to be thus condemned, as to the best means to take to evade the curse. Pennant, the antiquary, relates that he was threatened by a man, whom he had offended, "with the curse of St. Elian, and with an intimation that he would journey to the well to put the curse into effect."

In all these cases of the use of "cursing-stones," there is an earnest appeal to supernatural powers, but it is not to the Christian's God. Inquiries amongst the peasantry yield, in general, little result; suspicion is only aroused. Up to the present, archæological deductions are so tainted with religious prejudice and partizanship, that but little reliance can be placed upon them; on the one hand, there may be exaggeration; on the other hand, there is, most certainly, careful concealment. The real facts are well known to those who have studied the subject, and to those who are, so to speak, behind the scenes; but ordinary archæological students are only favoured with glimpses of the truth through occasional side-lights.

Prof, Nelson says that even so late as the close of the eighteenth century, in some mountainous districts in Norway, peasants used to preserve and reverence certain stones of a round form. Every Thursday evening they were washed, smeared before the fire with butter or grease, then dried and laid in the seat of honour; at certain seasons they were steeped in ale. All this was done with the idea that the stones, if so treated, would bring luck to the house. A sacred stone on the Island of Inisgloria used to be treated in a somewhat similar manner, and was, in addition, regularly clothed.

A missionary who settled on the eastern side of the island of Tanna, in the New Hebrides, was not allowed to build on the site he had selected, as it was sacred ground, on which were deposited stones in which the natives supposed the spirits of their departed relatives resided. On Vati Island are still to be observed a collection of stones and rudely-cut shells which, when the missionaries first arrived, were the only form of gods the natives possessed, and into which the spirits of their departed friends or relatives were supposed to enter. Most of the stones were ordinary smooth water-worn boulders, three to four inches long, and from two to three inches in diameter. Similar stones were reverenced by the Karens, the Boroditch Islanders, and the

Fijians. Several tribes of the Pacific chip these stone to permit, as they think, the spirits they contain to have free exit and entrance, whilst others, in addition, smear them with oil. Many Irish specimens have circular indentations sunk in them. May not the same ceremonies that prevailed in the East, and still prevail in the islands of the Pacific have obtained in Ireland? (See page 64.)

The following account, from *Polynesian Researches* (vol. 4, pp. 213–214), of the manner in which the natives of Haiwaii regarded certain stones, might, with but change in names, be applied to many remote parts of Ireland:—"We had not travelled far," writes Ellis, "before we reached Ninole, a small village on the sea-shore, celebrated on account of a short pebbly beach, called Koroa, the stones of which were reported to possess very singular properties, amongst others, that of propagating their species. The natives told us it was a *Wahi pana* (place famous) for supplying the stones employed in making small adzes and hatchets before they were acquainted with the use of iron; but particularly for furnishing the stones of which their gods were made, who presided over most of the games of Haiwaii. Some powers of discrimination, they told us, were necessary to discover the stones which would answer to be deified. When selected they were taken to the Heiau, and there several ceremonies were performed over them. Afterwards, when dressed and taken to the place where the games were practised, if the parties to whom they belonged were successful, their fame was established; but, if unsuccessful for several times together, they were either broken to pieces or thrown contemptuously away. When any were removed for the purpose of being transformed into gods, one of each sex was generally selected; these were always wrapped very carefully together in a piece of native cloth. After a certain time they said a small stone would be found with them, which, when grown to the size of its parents, was taken to the Heiau, or Temple, and afterwards made to preside at games. We were really surprised at the tenacity with which this last opinion was adhered to."

It was formerly a belief firmly held by the Irish peasantry that some kind of stones, under certain circumstances, as they expressed it, "grew."

When an Irish aborigine approached sacred stones at wells, springs, and other places, he imagined he was approaching and appealing to the spirits of his ancestors, promoted to be the presiding spirits of the place; hence he felt a wholesome fear which was transmitted, along with the cult, to early Christian, and thence on to recent times.

These stones, turned from left to right when he was praying,* but from right to left when cursing, were as we have seen invoked for evil purposes; it is now well to demonstrate that they were also invoked for good purposes.

At a site called "The Relig," near Bruckless, close to St. Conall's Well, on the northern side of Donegal Bay, there is a most interesting relic of paganism—a healing, medicinal, or magical stone of St. Conall (fig. 18), dark brown in colour, about five inches long, in shape and size somewhat like an ordinary dumb-bell. The stone probably owes its peculiar form to the action of water, to which also may be attributed three small hollows on the shaft (see also fig. 15). When not in use, it is kept in the hollow of a broken cross on the summit of the carn at "the Relig," and is regarded with the greatest reverence. The sick person has the stone conveyed to his house, where it is retained until the cure is effected, when it is returned to its resting place. There is no custodian, but when borrowed, notice is given to the people living near, and to return it to its original place is a matter of duty. It has, for centuries, had the reputation of curing diseases; it is even alleged that the stone was once sent to America, to cure a native of this portion of Donegal who had emigrated and desired to utilize its healing powers; possibly the patient had no faith in the medical skill of the physicians in the land of his adoption. The stone was honourably returned.

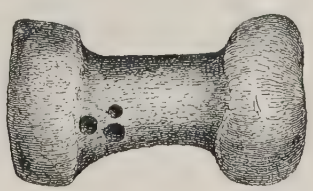

Fig. 18.—The Healing Stone of St. Conall. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

On the altar at Toomour, in the county Sligo, is a natural fragment of rock, or fossil, also resembling a dumb-bell in shape, and very like the healing-stone of St. Conall; on the wall behind the altar are seventeen globular stones designated "dicket

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* This was also customary in the island of Iona: a rite either imported thither by Irish missionaries or indigenous, as some writers state that the ancient name of the place was *Inis-Druineach*, i.e. the Island of the Druids.

In Toland's *History of the Druids* (edition 1814, p. 356), it is stated that before the Scottish Reformation there were in the island "three noble marble globes, placed in three stone basins, which the inhabitants turned three times round, according to the course of the sun. These were thrown into the sea at the Reformation; but Mr. Pennant, in 1772, found a wretched substitute for them, composed of the pedestal of a broken cross and the supporters of a gravestone. These stones were then turned round as formerly, and a tradition prevailed that the day of judgment would come when the pedestal upon which they moved was worn out."

stones" by the peasantry (fig. 19). The well of Toberaraght—reputed to cure many forms of disease—in the half-barony of Coolavin, county Sligo, is surrounded by a low wall, on the top

Fig. 19.
Altar at Toomour, with Dumb-bell Stone, and "dicket stones."

of which are placed thirteen round water-worn pebbles employed in the usual manner by those seeking restoration of their health (fig. 20). Stones occupy a prominent position in the empirical absurdities of country charlatans. To cure a person who is delirious from fever, a "fairy doctor" takes three oval stones, recites certain charms over them, and casts them in different directions, saying

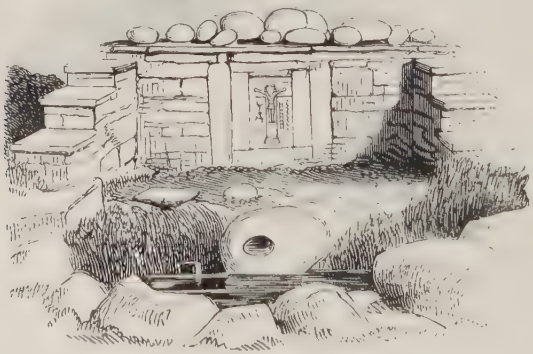
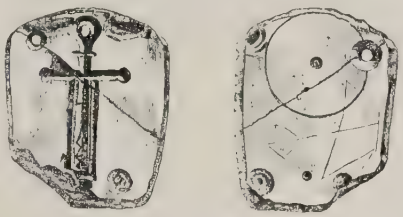


Fig. 20.
Altar at Toberaraght, with Globular Stones.

in Irish:—"The first I throw away for the head; the second I throw away for the heart; the third I throw away for the back."

The *Duibhin Deaglain*, i.e. St. Declan's Black Relic, deserves more notice than it has hitherto attracted. It is composed of

black marble, and was brought, as already stated (vol. i., p. 217), from Italy to Ireland, on the great rock in Ardmore Bay, which acted as ship for its conveyance. It is here reproduced on account of the curious *crux ansata* which it bears. It was employed to cure sore eyes, headache, and other ailments (fig. 21).



FRONT. BACK.

Fig. 21.

Front and back view of St. Declan's Black Relic, employed to cure sore eyes, headaches, &c. Half real size. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

Lying on the ground in the graveyard of the old church of Killery, Co. Sligo, is a thin flag, and at its south-eastern corner there is a small rectangular stone projecting about six inches above the surface of the soil. At all times may be seen around it a piece of string called the "straining string," supposed to be an infallible cure for strains, pains, and aches. The believer repairs, either by self or deputy, to the flagstone, on which lie seven egg-shaped stones, and removes from the "straining stone" the old string, replacing it by a new one. He then takes each stone in succession between the thumb and second finger of the left hand, and repeats certain prayers whilst turning it from left to right between his fingers (fig. 22).

A few years ago a young lady, who lived about twelve miles from the locality, met with a bad sprain. Her old nurse, who was devotedly attached to her, suddenly disappeared, and was not seen until the following morning, when she reappeared with a "straining string,"* procured from Killery, to which she had walked during the night, and the cord was immediately bound round the disabled limb. Youth, a sound constitution, and the family doctor,

Fig. 22.

Egg-shaped Stones, Straining Stone and Straining String, Killery, County Sligo.

* A very similar superstition exists in Scotland, for in some parts, when a person has received a sprain, it is customary to consult "an individual

effected a speedy cure; but nothing would persuade the old nurse but that it was to the efficacy of the "straining string" that her young charge owed her rapid recovery.

These straining strings or threads are sent for from far distant America by those who have emigrated from the neighbourhood, and who place more reliance on the benefit to be derived from them than on the skill of the New World physicians. This ceremony at Killery may be regarded as one of the most perfect representations of the survival of the semi-Christianization of a Pagan custom.

Upwards of thirty instances of patients suffering from sprains and wearing strings from this site, have been lately admitted, and treated, in the County Sligo Infirmary.

A dispensary doctor narrates that a woman consulted him "about a severe affection of the throat, and when examining her he found that she had a scarlet worsted thread tied round the throat and another round the wrists. Asking the meaning of this, she said that the old wise woman of the place had given them to her the night before as a certain cure. 'So as theydid no harm,' added the doctor, 'I left them on, though meanwhile I added what I considered best; and under the usual medical treatment she soon became quite well. But, all the same, she believed in the scarlet thread, and secretly thought that by its power she was cured of her ailment,'" for,

> "Roan tree and red thread,
> Put the witches to their speed."

According to Mr. R. Welch there is at the Killowen Cromleac, Kenmare, a ruined circle of stones. On the top of the largest boulder there is placed a piece of limestone with a cord rolled loosely round it. The man living in the nearest house to this rude stone monument would not say what the small stone

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practised in casting what is called the 'wrested thread.' This consists of a thread spun from black wool, on which are cast nine knots, and is tied round the sprained limb. During the time the operator is putting this on, he repeats, in a muttering voice, inaudible even to the bystanders, these words:—

> 'The lord rade (rode),
> And the foal slade (slipped).
> He lighted,
> And she righted.
> Bone to bone,
> And sinew to sinew,
> Heal in the Holy Ghost's name!'"

This is, with a slight change of words, a mere adaptation of an old pagan charm.

and cord rolled round it were for, though repeatedly asked, but stated that they had been always there "in his time" (fig. 23).

In the Western Isles a strand of black wool is wound round and round the ankles, as a charm to cure a sprain, while the operator mutters some doggerel lines. The same has also been observed in Sligo. A similar charm was used in Germany and many other countries: in fact the custom is widespread.

Lady Wilde also recounts another cure for a sprain. A young girl, who must be under fourteen years of age, spins a thread dry, "that is, without saliva; then she ties it round the leg or the arm afflicted, and when the cure is completed, the thread miraculously disappears."

Fig. 23.

Part of Stone Circle, near Kenmare. On the top of the largest boulder there is a small stone, which has a cord always rolled round it. Photo. by J. St. J. Phillips.

Amongst the means employed by the Babylonians for warding off attacks of evil spirits during the hours of darkness were magical threads, wound round the limbs, to which phylacteries were attached, on which were written sentences from a holy book.

Certain kinds of strings appear to cure both man and beast. For instance, if a cow becomes restive, plunges about and refuses food, she is said by the country people to have the *peist*, worm or serpent. To cure this, a string is twisted into a knot

resembling a coiled worm. It seems so firmly knotted as to defy untying, yet there is a knack of drawing out the two ends, leaving the string quite free. This is repeated three times. For a charm against the disease styled "black leg" in calves, a hole is made in the dewlap, through which a red string is passed, and allowed to remain.

Mr. T. J. Westropp states that, at the parish Church of Tomfinlough, county Clare, "the plague-stone, with raised circles, one forming a Celtic cross, is built into the wall; it is said to have kept pestilence from the parish, even at the time of the Great Cholera."

Cases occur in which the lithic object is found entirely removed from its hallowing surroundings, though it possesses certain definite powers, as for instance "doctor stones" still used in many parts of Ireland. One very celebrated specimen was located in the neighbourhood of Oughterard, Co. Galway. It was in great request there, and also in the neighbouring portion of the Co. Mayo. It was considered unlucky to keep it in a house, and those who used it hid it until it was again required. This custom is paralleled by the superstition which makes a countryman avoid encountering a "wise woman" after she has effected the cure of a patient, lest she should impart to him the disease which she is believed to have more or less absorbed in her own person. Another "doctor stone" belonged to a family who resided in the Co. Wicklow; the eldest male member of the family was held to be able to effect cures by its means.

Of all materials appropriated to the uses of superstitious medicament, crystal, and in later time, glass were pre-eminent. Of the former material were the "adder stones" or serpent's eggs of pseudo-archæology. The material is styled "the splendid product of the adder," and of its origin Pliny has left a marvellous account;* indeed few objects have obtained a more remarkable notoriety than wonder-working crystals. Their fortunate

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* "Præterea est ovorum genus, in magna Galliarum fama, omissum Græcis. Angues innumeri æstate convoluti, salivis tancium, corporum que Spumis artifici complexu glomerantur, anguinum appellatur. Druidæ sibilis id dicunt sublime jactari, sagoque oportere intercipi ne tellurem attingat. Profugere raptorem equo; serpentes enim insequi, donec arceantur amnis alicujus interventu. Experimentum ejus esse, si contra aquas fluitet vel auro vinctum. Atque, ut est Magorum Solertia occultandis fraudibus sagax, certa Luna capiendum censent, tanquam congruere operationem eam serpentium humani sit arbitrii. Vidi equidem id ovum mali orbiculati modici magnitudine, crusta cartilaginis, velut acetabulis brachiorum Polypi crebis, insigne Druidis. Ad victorias litium, ac regum aditus, mire laudatur: tantæ vanitatis, ut habentem id in lite, in sinu Equitem Romanum e Vocontiis, a Divo Claudio Principe interemptum non ob aliud sciam."—Plin. *Nat. Hist.*, lib. 29, chap. 3.

possessors were believed by their means to obtain superiority over their adversaries; and when placed under the pillow were of benefit to women in childbirth.

The Garnavilla amulet is a crystal ball, set in a bronze frame, with a loop for suspension. It was frequently borrowed by the country people of the neighbourhood as an antidote to disease in cattle. To effect a cure it was tied round the neck of the beast and thus dropped into the food as the animal stooped to eat (fig. 24).

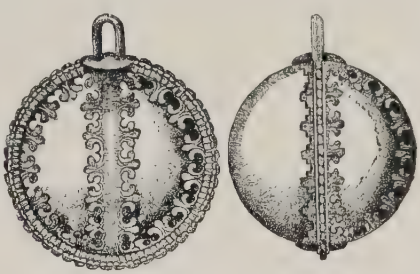

Fig. 24.

The Garnavilla Amulet. Front and side view; half real size. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

The Ballyvourney murrain stone is a sphere of some hard brown stone, resembling basalt, and about five and a-half inches in diameter. Many virtues are ascribed to it, and legends without number are recounted of the cures which it effected when in the possession of St. Gobnate.

The Imokilly amulet (fig. 25) is described by G. M. Atkinson as a sphere, almost two inches in diameter, weighing five ounces, "a polished ball of tricciated or banded agate, dark grey in colour, clouded. It is streaked with white lines fading away, and the centre part is of a red colour, due to the presence of some metallic oxide, probably iron. A hole is pierced through the middle: possibly it was worn slung round the neck, and there is a little roughness at the bottom, leading to a supposition that a metal band had been fastened around it formerly. There are several apparent fracture-lines through the ball, caused, perhaps, by its being heated and immediately immersed in cold water; but, I am happy to say, it is still entire. There are two very slight marks of circles on it (fig. 25). The curative virtues of this stone are still believed in by the country people. By being placed in a vessel containing water, the water is supposed to get

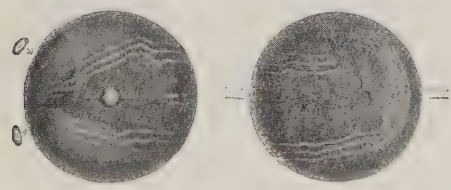

Fig. 25.

The Imokilly Amulet. Half real size. From a coloured drawing by G. M. Atkinson. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

impregnated with the healing powers, which, mixed with more water, is administered to the suffering cattle, . . . a certain cure for 'murrain' in cattle, and also for hydrophobia." It is interesting to find Pliny's ideas about the virtues of the agate still existing in Ireland.*

In the county Clare an amber bead was formerly used for the cure of sore eyes, and for other purposes (see vol. i., p. 185).

A stone formed of crystal is described by Martin, in his account of the Island of Arran, as about the size of a goose's egg. It was thrown among the enemy in battle, and always gave victory to its owners, the Mac Donalds of the Isles. In later times it removed internal pains. If the stone failed to effect a cure, it, of its own accord, left the sick man. In fig. 26, figs. 2 and 3 represent the front and back view of an Irish charm, the "Bloodstone Amulet." Fig. 4 is "the Mac Carthy Amulet."

Water, consecrated by the immersion in it of these sacred relics, retained its supposed efficacy in Christian quite as fully as in Pagan times. Bede states that amongst his Saxon countrymen a portion of King Oswald's Cross, immersed in water, and the water then given to the stricken, restored ailing human beings, or cattle to health. A similar property was supposed to reside in

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* G. M. Atkinson, in his description of the "Imokilly Amulet," quotes Pliny (Bostock and Riley's translation) on the properties of the agate, as follows:—"Achates (a general name for agate, and possibly some other stones not now included under the name) was a stone formerly in high esteem, but now held in none, first found in Sicily near a river of that name. (After enumerating the different descriptions, he mentions corallo achates.) Coral agate, spotted all over like sapphires, with drops of gold, and commonly found in Crete, where it is also known as sacred achates. This last, it is thought, is good for wounds inflicted by spiders and scorpions, a property which I could really believe to belong to the stones of Sicily, for the moment they breathe the air of that province scorpions lose their venom. (St. Patrick must have transferred this virtue to 'ould' Ireland.) These stones found in India are possessed of similar properties, great and marvellous, and present remarkable appearances. The very sight of them is beneficial for the eyes; held in the mouth they allay thirst. Those found in Phrygia have no green in them, and those of Thebes, in Egypt, are destitute of red and white veins. These last are good as a counterpoison to the venom of the scorpion, like the stones of Cyprus. The magicians make other distinctions; they tell us those which have spots upon them, like the spots on the lion's skin, are efficacious as a protection against scorpions; and in Persia they say, these stones are used by way of fumigation for arresting tempests and hurricanes, and for stopping the course of rivers, etc., and turn water cold if thrown into a boiling caldron. To be duly efficacious they must be attached to the body with hairs from a lion's mane. The hair, however, of the hyæna is held in abomination for this purpose, as being a promotor of discord in families. The stone that is of a uniform colour renders athletes invincible, they say. The way of testing it is to throw it, along with colouring matter, into a pot full of oil. After being kept for a couple of hours gently on the boil, if genuine, it will impart an uniform colour of vermilion to the mixture."—Plin. *Nat. Hist.*, lib. 37, chap. 54.

FIG. 26.

Irish Medical Amulets.—Fig. 1. Connoch, or Murrain Caterpillar Charm, found at Timoleague Abbey, County Cork. Figs. 2 & 3. Front and back view of the Bloodstone Amulet. Fig. 4. The MacCarthy Amulet. Fig. 5 is like fig. 1, formed of silver, found near Doneraile, County Cork. Slightly more than half-size. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

parings from old Irish MSS., shreds of which, steeped in water, and then given to the patient, were a certain antidote to many poisons.

A case that created much amusement, and one listened to with deep interest by a crowded court, came on for investigation at Cork, in 1840, on a summons to show cause why an information should not be taken against a man for unlawfully possessing himself of, and detaining, a "murrain stone." The owner, an old woman, who sought its recovery, described it as "a weeny stone, which was kept in an ancient silver box so that the daylight couldn't see it." To cure a beast it was only necessary to make the sign of the cross by rubbing it to the back of the ailing animal three times on three consecutive mornings. Its owner added, "a friend of mine in de country had his cattle sick, and learning through a gossip, dat I had de stone he came and borrowed it of me, and I gave it to him; of course I daren't refuse it when he spake de word."

"*Attorney.* A charmed word I suppose?

"*Owner.* You mustn't hear it. You havn't de faith (laughter).

"*Attorney.* Of course not. Well, did he rub it to the cattle?

"*Owner.* To be sure he did.

"*Attorney.* And they are all well?

"*Owner.* Of course.

"*Attorney.* What became of the stone?

"*Owner.* When de miracle was worked he sent home de sthone, but de garsoon (boy) mistook de house, and gave it to Con Sheehan.

"*Attorney.* And Con refuses to return it?

"*Owner.* He gives no sattysfaction at all, at all.

"*Attorney.* Have you anything more to say, ma'am?

"*Owner.* I say dis, if he don't send it home to me he and all belonging to him will taw like ice."

The attorney having thus closed his case the Bench declared it had no jurisdiction.

An amulet of shining crystal, about the size of a large marble, was many years ago in the possession of a Mrs. Philip Noonan, of Liscarroll, who, once a year, used to dip the charm in water in the presence of her neighbours, to whom she then distributed the water. G. M. Atkinson believed that this amulet was the subject of the foregoing lawsuit, and he adds, "its possessor at present (1876) is Mrs. Gould, a daughter of the above-mentioned Mrs. Noonan."

When the plague raged in Scotland, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the services of the famous "Lee Penny," which suggested to Sir Walter Scott the idea of his Romance entitled "The Talisman," were being constantly requisitioned as

a charm against the plague, and when it crossed the border into England the "Lee Penny" was promptly borrowed by the municipality of Newcastle, who deposited with its owners—the Lockharts of Lee House, Lanarkshire—a large sum of money as guarantee of its safe return; a very necessary precaution, for so convinced were the good people of Newcastle of its plague-curing efficacy that they actually wanted to retain the charm and forfeit the deposit. The "Lee Penny" is simply a small triangular pebble, set in an old silver coin, obtained in Spain by Sir Simon Lockhart, as part ransom of a Moorish chief, when that knight accompanied Lord James Douglas in the abortive expedition to bury the heart of Bruce in the Holy Land.

Mary Queen of Scots appears to have been a firm believer in the efficacy of healing stones, for on the eve of her execution, when writing to her brother-in-law, Henry III. of France, she bequeaths to him "two rare stones, and valuable for the health," asking him to accept them "in token of true love towards him."

We see then that great veneration, subject to certain conditions and ceremonials, appears to have been paid by the ancient, and indeed by many of the modern Irish, to various inanimate objects and materials; in nothing is this so remarkable as in the lithic objects which were used for purposes of prayer, for cursing and for the cure of ailments. Truth is often stranger than fiction, and this latter popular Irish charm, or cure, has been transplanted from its native land, and has taken root and flourished on the American continent. An Irish emigrant to Texas had a "Madstone," reputed to be a perfect remedy for hydrophobia, which effected several cures. It would be interesting to know how the Madstones were employed in Ireland, and if any are now used. A charm for farcy, which had been employed for generations by a family in the county Limerick, is now used by a member of that same family on his horses, in a great ranching country, within the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, in the north-west territory of Canada.

For cattle-murrain—a plague emanating from fairy malice—the remedy, as we have seen (vol. i., pages 79–81), is simple. The sick beast is given a drink from a vessel in which is placed a stone axe, a flint arrow-head, or some such ancient lithic implement. When, however, the disease is diagnosed by the "fairy-doctor" as proceeding from the *connoch*, a supposed peculiarly poisonous caterpillar, swallowed by the animal and believed to produce internal disorder, generally of a fatal character, the remedy is more difficult of attainment, for it consists in giving the afflicted beast to drink from a vessel, in the bottom of which is placed a silver model of this murrain-caterpillar. Two of these amulets, found in the county Cork, one in the old

burying place of Timoleague Abbey, the other near Doneraile, are formed of silver, in which is embedded a series of amber and azure coloured crystals. Each charm is about three inches in length. The figures of the two silver *connochs* (see fig. 26, figs. 1 and 5) represent, clearly enough, larvæ of the larger sphinx-moth; one very like that of the elephant hawk-moth, common in Ireland; the other resembles that of the (in Ireland) comparatively rare death's-head hawk-moth. The practice among the peasantry, when they find one of these latter grubs, is to insert it in the cleft of a young ash sapling, which soon puts an end to the caterpillar, whatever effect it may have on the murrain-epidemic. Even to dream, you see this caterpillar betokens ill-luck and misfortune.

Why the form of the grub, which is supposed to have produced the distemper, or the flint axe or arrow-head which produced symptoms of disease, should be selected as the means of procuring a recovery, it is difficult to tell, yet the idea has the sanction of classical antiquity and of modern homœopathy.

A country man had the misfortune to be badly wounded in the chest, with a steel hay-fork, whilst working on a rick. His wife kept the prongs of the implement bright and polished, until the wound healed, as she said that otherwise, if the steel of the fork became rusty, the wound would suppurate.

Horace alludes to the superstitious belief that only the same weapon that inflicted the injury could heal it, as was the case with the wounded Telephus. Shakspeare adverts to the same principle when he says that the toad carried in its head an antidote to its own poison.

The basis of homœopathic treatment is *similia similibus curantur*, like things are cured by like, and we are still frequently recommended to "take a hair of the dog that bit you." Homœopathic adepts amongst the Irish Fairy Doctors generally order medicine of a yellowish colour, for the jaundice, such as saffron, turmeric, and sulphur. The Allopathic school, on the contrary, employs other remedies, and pays no regard to colour. Thus there are two schools of medicine even amongst the Irish Fairy Doctors.

Throughout Ireland there are many traces of the former custom of praying to, or asking certain gifts or favours from, a lithic object or from a well. On the summit of one of the pinnacles of Tormore, on Tory Island, a large stone is shown by the natives who call it "the wishing stone." They allege that whoever stands on this stone, and turns round three times, will obtain whatever he wishes for. "Wishing Wells" are to be met with in most counties; the wisher on bended knee, and with

hands clasped behind his back, takes a draught, and then silently wishes, but it is essential that the supplicant should not make known his wishes till they are granted, and ill-natured people allege that, for this reason, there are but few female votaries amongst the successful postulants. These wells had a wonderful reputation, and women would go, apparently half ashamed, to whisper their wish and drink in good hope of a fortunate result. Thus water-worship, recommended by Seneca and by the Church, is a cult not yet extinct; these wishing wells belong however to a class from which the heathen ideas, that in days of yore clung around them, have now vanished to a greater extent than from those adopted into Christian usage.

Scenes of faith, of love, and piety are, happily, more frequent among devotees at the holy wells than are the mutterings of malediction, for "At these sacred places may be seen the mother praying for her child, the girl for her lover, the wife for her husband, going the rounds on their bare knees, with the crucifix in their clasped hands, their eyes raised to heaven in silent prayer, with a divine faith that their prayer will be answered; and who can say but that the fervour of the supplication has often brought down the blessing of healing for the sick, or comfort for the sorrowing? The picturesque grouping round the holy well, the background of purple mountains, the antique stone cross at which the pilgrims kneel, the costumes and often the beautiful faces of the praying women, with their long dark hair and purple Irish eyes, form a scene of wonderful poetic and dramatic interest."

A contributor to *Notes and Queries*, writing in 1876, says:—"I remember, as a child, to have been surreptitiously taken, by an Irish nurse, to St. John's Well, Aghada, county Cork, on the vigil of the saint's day, to be cured of whooping cough, by drinking three times of the water of the holy well. I shall never forget the strange spectacle of men and women, creeping on their knees, in voluntary devotion, or in obedience to enjoined penance, so many times round the well, which was protected by a grey stone hood, and had a few white thorn trees growing near it, on the spines of which fluttered innumerable shreds of frieze and varied coloured rags, the votive offerings of devotees and patients."

Thus we see that whilst many superstitions may be considered trifling and silly, others are really useful so far as they influence those who thoroughly believe in them, to right courses.

The immediate surroundings of a celebrated and much frequented holy well are, at all times, festooned with many-coloured rags, red, blue, green, white, black—in fact, kaleidescopic in character—tied up to denote, in a modern sense, a finale to the "rounds" and prayers, but which, if the action of attaching them

to the trees or bushes be analysed, has a deeper and more mystic meaning. If there are no trees or bushes, brambles will do as well, and, failing these, an upright weed, or a strong stalk of grass is deemed sufficient. The rags are to be met with everywhere in the vicinity of these springs, in the old churchyard, beneath the shade of trees, on the open mountain slope, in the secluded glen, or on the busy village green.

Fig. 27 is the reproduction of a photograph, taken in the month of November, 1900, of some of the rags attached to trees, bushes, and brambles around the Holy Well of Tubbernalt, near the town of Sligo. This collection consists of four groups: one to the left front of the boy seated on the ground; the second stretched between the two dark tree trunks to his left; the third row suspended to the left of the tree overhanging the rivulet; the fourth group tied on the brambles at the base of this tree.

This custom of tying rags to trees, bushes, and, where these are not at hand, to briars or stalks of grass, has exercised students of archaic practices ever since the customs of the peasantry have been examined in a critical spirit. To this practice may be added that of throwing pins into sacred wells. These practices seem strange and meaningless until one has learned that almost all old customs have a reason for their origin and existence. There are many wells into which it was usual to drop pins, which were generally bent. It has been suggested that the intention was to exorcise the evil spirit afflicting the person who threw in the pins. It is hardly necessary to add that in former times it was believed that all human ailments were owing to the machination of evil spirits. The ceremony for a cure for warts was to wash the warts and prick them with a pin, which was then bent and dropped into the water; but all crooked pins lying in the bottom of wells were not necessarily used as a charm for warts, as, for some unknown reason, crooked pins are supposed to bring good luck: if you wish a person good luck, stick a crooked pin in his coat.

The rag, or ribbon, taken from the clothing, tied up to a tree, and fluttering in the breeze, is viewed somewhat in the light of a scapegoat, and is considered to be the depository of the spiritual or bodily ailments of the suppliant. This is exemplified by an anecdote related of a vindictive peasant who took the rags from the bushes around a holy well and scattered them on the highway along which a neighbour, against whom he bore ill-will, was in the habit of passing, in the hope that he might pick them up, and thereby become possessed of all the maladies with which they were stored. It is alleged that the inhabitants of the Orkneys, for a similar purpose, wash a sick person, and then throw the water on to the highway, in the belief that the sickness will be

Fig. 27.
Rags tied on Trees, &c., at Tubbernalt, near Sligo. Photo. by T. Kilgannon, Sligo.

transferred from the patient to the first person who passes over the spot. In some parts of Ireland and Scotland, parings from the nails of the sick, or a small portion of their hair are placed in a packet, and left on the road; the passer by, who picks it up, will forthwith have the malady transferred to himself.

The supposed transference of disease, from the sufferer to some other subject, other than the rags, &c., is a more developed form of this superstition. For instance, keep your eye fixed on the new moon; stoop; lift a portion of the dust or clay under your right foot; rub the warts with it; and as the moon wanes, the warts disappear. Go through the same performance as a funeral passes; cast the dust or clay in front of the corpse; and as the body decays in the grave the warts diminish. Choose a large black snail; rub it on the wart; then impale it on a thorn; as the snail withers, so does the wart. Steal a small piece of meat from a butcher's shop, bury it, and as it decays, the wart disappears. In some districts this custom seems to have changed into the larceny of a potato, and the disease is supposed to be gradually transmitted from the human being to the tuber. In similar manner a sheaf of oats or other grain is sometimes buried in the ground, whilst certain forms are gone through, and incantations are recited, in the belief that, as the grain rots, so the person against whom the spell is directed will, *pari passu*, fail and wither away. This principle was once admitted into surgery, when, some three centuries ago, the learned chirurgeon anointed and dressed the weapon, instead of the wound which it had inflicted. *Huggada, huggada, lekne, lekne,* "To you, to you, the lekne," is said by a woman three times at the door of a pig-sty. She must, at the same time, hold in her arms the child suffering from "lekne," or swelling in the glands of the neck. The malady is by this means transferred from the child to the unfortunate pig.

In all these instances there is a symbolic as well as supposed actual transference of the malady from the sufferer to some other object, animate or inanimate. A striking example of this is afforded by the dread of the peasantry at the appearance of a "wise woman," or witch, under whose treatment a patient has recently recovered. They imagine that the first living thing her eyes fall on, after the cure of her patient, is afflicted with the malady of the sick person whom she has attended, and men and women will carefully avoid meeting a witch for a considerable time after she has effected a cure.

Thus it will be seen that rags tied around holy wells are not merely offerings, or votive; they are riddances. If you have a headache, you take a shred from your clothing, and place it on the tree, and with it you place, or hope to place, the headache

there; the putting up of these rags is a putting away of the evils impending, or incurred by sin, the anger of the gods, of the saints, or of "the others"—an act which should be accompanied in modern times by the ritual words, Aiſ impiðe an Tiġeſna mo ċuið tinneaſ ðo ṗaġaim ain an aiṫ ſo, "By the intercession of the Lord, I leave my portion of illness in this place." A similar custom prevailed in Scotland. Travellers in the East mention trees and bushes festooned with rags, fastened as offerings to the branches. We read of a Hindoo rajah performing his devotions on the occasion of a pilgrimage to a celebrated temple, which he enriched with a variety of offerings; and having performed all the ceremonies and rites attendant thereto, he ended his devotions by attaching a rag to an adjacent tree.

Fig. 28.

Rude Idol of wood, from West Africa, with offerings in the shape of iron nails driven into it. Photo. from *Strand Magazine*.

The rude effigy represented by figure 28, from West Africa, is no more than a half shaped upright figure, without limbs or features. The first impression which one might be under, is that it must have incurred unpopularity by neglecting to answer prayers, the indignation of its worshippers taking the form of driving nails into its sacred person. The nails are, on the contrary, costly offerings, as the idol comes from a part where iron is extremely scarce, so the devout negro, who was anxious to propitiate this divinity, sacrificed one of his most valuable nails to it by the "simple and respectful process of hammering it into the hallowed stomach." This custom arises from reasoning, similar to that which underlies the practices of witchcraft. Many savages will not permit their likenesses to be taken, nor will they tell their names to strangers, for that would put them in the power of the person who possessed their likeness, or who

knew their names. Thus, if an article in the custody of a malevolent power, causes its former owner to suffer, the same article in the possession of a beneficent power, relieves pain, restores health, or promotes prosperity. Clothing, or a shred torn from a garment to represent it, if placed upon a sacred tree, or dropped into a holy well, a pin that has pricked a wart and has been deposited at a holy place, a stone taken up and cast into a hallowed spot, an iron nail driven into an idol's "hallowed stomach"—these are all in continual contact with the local powers, and the effluence of the power overshadowing the representative object, will, if properly manipulated, reach and overshadow the postulant. There are instances where the real object of a rite having been lost sight of, the practices have become deflected from their earlier forms. For example, Athenian women, in the olden days, who for the first time became pregnant, were in the habit of hanging up their girdles in the temple of Artemis; the meaning underlying the act is clear, as is also the converse case, related of the Ursuline Nuns of Quintin, who kept one of the largest schools in Brittany. "When a girl who had been their pupil, marries and enters the interesting situation of the Athenian women just referred to, the pious nuns send her a white silken ribbon, painted in blue—the Virgin's colour—with the words, 'Notre Dame de Deliverance protegez-vous.' Before sending it off, they touch with it the reliquary of the parish church, which contains a fragment of the Virgin Mary's zone. The recipient hastens to put the ribbon round her waist, and does not cease to wear it until the baby is born, for the ribbon, having been in contact with divinity, though that contact has ceased to outward appearance, is still in some subtle connection with the goddess."

In Ireland the ceremony of leaving a piece of the clothing on an adjacent tree, does not appear to be exclusively confined to water worship; for at a cromleac in Valentia Island, at certain seasons, the peasantry circumambulate the monument and attach their rags as at holy wells. However, it may be pointed out that some sepulchral tumuli are believed to have been erected over wells. A rude stone monument, covering a well, is mentioned in a *Life of St. Patrick*; another is pointed out at Ballycroum, in the county Clare, while, at a cromleac in Kerry, a spring is said to have existed, and the rites customary at a holy well were paid at it.

Dr. O'Connor, in his *Columbanus ad Hibernos*, written in 1810, states that he pressed a very old peasant to state what possible advantage he expected to derive from frequenting wells near "old blasted oaks" or "upright, unhewn stones," and to explain

the meaning of spitting on, and placing rags on the branches of the surrounding trees. The old man and his companions could only explain that both they and their ancestors were always accustomed to do it, that they considered it a preservative against "*Geasa draoidecht*, i. e. the sorceries of the Druids, that their cattle were preserved by it from infectious disorders; that the *daoini-maithe*, i. e. the fairies, were kept in good humour by it; and so thoroughly persuaded were they of the sanctity of these pagan practices, that they would travel bare-headed and bare-footed from 10 to 20 miles, for the purpose of crawling on their knees around these wells, and upright stones, and oak trees, westward as the sun travels, some three times, some six, some nine, and so on, in uneven numbers, until their voluntary penances were completely fulfilled."

A few descriptions of wells, in different parts of the kingdom, are given as examples of this wide-spread survival of pagan observances. Many are more frequented by devotees than casual observers imagine; and numerous springs are still held in veneration, although all, or almost all traces of worship, at some of the ancient shrines, have apparently vanished. For example, at a well not far from Rosses Point, county Sligo, it was stated, by one who ought to be considered a good authority on the subject, that the ancient cult was completely extinct in the surrounding district. Surprise was strongly depicted on the faces of those to whom were pointed out threads of cotton tied on the stalks of grass around the well. This custom can be observed where least expected. About a hundred yards from the little church of Kilmacteigue, county Sligo, lies the insignificant looking well of Tubberkeeran; an ash overhanging the spring is covered with many-coloured rags, mementoes left by pious pilgrims to the place. The tiny well, now nearly filled by the gnarled roots of the tree, is frequented by the country people for various purposes, principally by those whose cows are sick, or not yielding as much milk as their owners expected.

In the townland of Glenawoo, not far distant from the foregoing well, lies that of Toberaraght, still visited for restoration of health from diseases of peculiar character, such as epilepsy. The valley was formerly the haunt of a monstrous eel, *piast*, or serpent, that devoured every animal, or human being, within reach—hence the name of the glen—until St. Araght slew it on the spot where the well sprang up. Around it, as also around the stations at St. Barbara's Well, closely adjoining, trees and bushes are covered with offerings in the form of rags. Toberroddy, in the immediate vicinity, is a disenchanted spring; it lost its efficacy in the year 1775, when a gentleman utilised a stone which belonged to the sacred site, as building material for

his new residence. This was no sooner completed than it fell, and the flag-stone was found back again in its original position; but from that date "the power" left the waters of the well, for holy wells and even lakes, when insulted, either lose their efficacy, dry up, or migrate to some other locality. Not far from Stuake, county Cork, is the dried site of St. Lacteen's Well, surrounded by thorn bushes. The peasantry attribute the disappearance of the water to its desecration by a woman who washed her soiled clothes in it. This legend resembles the story in Pausanias, related of a magical well in the Peloponnesus, in which every ship sailing in the Mediterranean was reflected, but a woman having washed a soiled garment in the water, the spring thereupon lost its miraculous properties.

The following were esteemed sacred springs in the parish of Drumcliff, county Sligo:—*Tobar-na-bachaille*, or the well of the crozier; *Tobar-Muire*, Mary's well. On Lady Day there are, it is stated, stations still carried on there. The well was reputed to have been the home of sacred trout, and to have possessed healing virtues, particularly in cases of ophthalmia. There is St. Patrick's well, where a legend recounts that the saint baptized converts. There are also the wells of *Tobar-na-bolgoighe*, Tobervogue, and Tober Columbkill. In the footnote is a list of wells in the county Sligo which were formerly held in estimation as "holy." *

The ceremonies at "St. Patrick's bed," near Croagh Patrick, are described by an eye-witness who saw them in 1826. Two old trees overshadowed "the bed" and the pilgrims presented a

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* In the parish of Kilmacowen, Toberpatrick; parish of Calry, Tober-Connel; parish of Ballysadare, Tobercurrin, Tobertullaghan, and Tobercallen; parish of Killoran, Tobergal; parish of Achonry, Toberaribba, Tobercurry, Toberaraght, and Tobercully; parish of Dromard, Toberpatrick; parish of Skreen, Toberpatrick, Toberawnaun, and Toberloran; parish of Easky, St. Adman's well, Toberavidden, and Toberalternan; parish of Templeboy, Toberpatrick, Tobernasool, and Tobercahillbroght; parish of Kilglass, St. Patrick's well; parish of Castleconor, Toberpatrick; parish of Ballysadare, Toberloonagh, and Toberbride; parish of Ballynakill, Lady's well, and Darby's well; the latter was anciently styled Toberlastra or Toberlastrach; parish of Kilmactranny, Tobermurry—there was also anciently (according to the Ordnance Survey notes) a well, styled *Tobar-Ehilibh*, or St. Elva's well; parish of Kilmacallan, Tobermoneen, and Tobernaglashy, so named from an enchanted cow which used to regale herself at the spring; parish of Aghanagh, Tobermonia, Toberbride, Tobermurray, Toberpatrick, and Tobermahon; parish of Tawnagh, Toberpatrick, Tobernalee, Kingsbrook, Toberstarling, and Tobernagalliagh; parish of Shancough, St. James's well; parish of Drumcolumb, St. Columb's well; parish of Kilross, Toberdoney, beautifully situated, still used for cures, and frequented on St. Peter and St. Paul's day; parish of Emlaghfad, Holywell; parish of Toomour, Tobernacarta, Tobernamalla, Toberliubhan, Toberacol, Tobercloicharig, or King's well; parish of Kilturra, St. Araght's well, and Toberpatrick; parish of Drumrat, Toberbride, or Tobernanavin, and Toberbarry; parish of Cloonaghill, Tobernecrin; parish of Kilfree, Tobernabraher, and Tobernaneagh; parish of Killaraght, Toberpatrick.

singular appearance when the station was over, for the people "cut off their hair, both men and women, and take horseshoes, and brogue-nails, pins and needles, and fasten them to the trees; they also cut up their clothes, be they ever so new, and tie them to these trees."

At Loughadrine, in the county Cork, there is a lake formerly held sacred. On its northern bank a celebrated station was held, until, of late years, the clergy interfered and suppressed it; offerings of rags were tied on all the bushes.

Fig. 29.

St. Bridget's Well, County Clare. From a pencil-sketch taken in the year 1824.

There is a holy well, overshadowed by a thorn-bush covered with votive offerings, near the farm of Montaggart, county Cork, called "Bat's Well" by an irreverent abbreviation of St. Bartholomew's name. In the townland of Mount Bridget, about two miles from Buttevant, is St. Bridget's Holy Well where "rounds" are still paid. The spring is shaded by an ancient ash, facetiously styled "Biddy's tree"; its branches laden with many coloured shreds of clothing. Fig. 29 is a pencil-sketch, made

in the year 1824, of another spring, situated in the county Clare, also dedicated to the same saint, and called St. Bridget's Well.

In a Paper on the "Churches of the County Clare" (vol. 6, 3rd ser., Proc. R. I. A., pp. 100–180), Mr. T. J. Westropp, M.A., records upwards of one hundred holy wells in this county. Special attention is directed to Tobereevul, the well of Aoibhill, the great banshee of the Dalcassians, on Craglea, above Killaloe; to Tobereendowney, at Kiltumper, on the borders of the county Galway; to Tobersheela and to Tobergrania, in Ballycroum, a cromleac, or rude stone monument, used as a holy well. These are all indubitably of pre-Christian origin. Clare and Sligo appear to be the only counties in Ireland where even the mere enumeration of the sites of holy wells has been attempted.*

Barnaby Ryche, describing in 1624, Irish holy wells in general, but those of the city of Dublin in particular, quaintly observed (spelling modernized) "that if there were but one-half of the virtue in them, that the Irish do believe, and will confidently avow, we need no other physic nor surgery to heal all manner of diseases. The blind might be restored to sight, the halt and lame to their limbs; there is no infirmity but it might be cured at sundry sanctified and holy wells, whereof there are great plenty in Ireland. The city of Dublin is quartered out with them. First, on the east part, they have St. Patrick's Well, the water whereof, although it be generally reputed to be very hot, yet the very prime of the perfection is upon the 17th of March, which is St. Patrick's Day, and upon this day the water is more holy than it is all the year after, or else the inhabitants of Dublin are more foolish upon

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* The well and holy tree of St. Mogua lie to the north-east of O'Davoren's church, parish of Noughaval, county Clare. At Kinallia, in the parish of Carran, is a large bullan, in the natural rock, and near it a well and altar. The Well of St. Fachtnan is at St. Fachnan's Cathedral; Well of St. Lonan at Clooney parish church; the Well of St. Patrick in the parish of Templepatrick; the Well of St. Tola, in Disert-Tola; Well of St. Laughteen, Kilnamona; St. John's Well, convent of St. John; Well of Kilvoydan, parish of Inchicronan; Well of Toberineenboy, parish of Doora; Well of Tobernighnee, at St. Finghin's church; Well of St. John, parish of Killeely; Well of St. Mochulla, parish of Kilnoe; St. Mary's Well, St. Mary's, Iniscaltra, Lough Derg; St. Seily's Well, parish of Kilseily; St. Cronan's Well, parish of Killokennedy; St. Lenan's Well, parish of Clonlea; well at Kilcredann, parish of O'Brien Bridge; St. Mochulla's Well, Kiltinanlea; Toberbreedia, in Inismore, or Deer Island; Tober-righ-an-domhnaigh, parish of Kilmihil; St. Emeria's Well, parish of Killimer; St. Caritan's Well, parish of Moyarta; Kilkee, barony of Inchiquin, a holy well; islands, Kilfiddan; Toberniddann: Kilvelly, barony of Bunratty; Toberbreedia; Kiltanon, Toberbreedia; Cragg, Tobermochulla; Fortanne, Tobermochulla; Kilgorey, Tobermochulla; Kilmore, Tobermore and Toberamanrielta; all in the barony of Tulla; Kilbreedia, barony of Ibrican, Toberbreedia; Kiltrelly, barony of Moyarta, a holy well; Kilclogher, barony of Moyarta, Tobersenan. The holy well of Tobermacreagh

that day, than they be all the year after; for, upon that day, thither they will run, by heaps, men, women, and children, and then, first performing certain superstitious ceremonies, they drink of the water; and, when they are returned to their own homes, for nine days after, they will sit and tell what wonderful things have been wrought by the operation of the water of St. Patrick's Well.

"On the west part of Dublin they have St. James, his well, and his feast is celebrated the 25th of July; and upon that day a great mart, or fair, is kept, fast by the well. The commodity that is there to be vended is nothing else but ale, no other merchandise, but only ale; I think such another fact was never heard of in any other place, where a man cannot buy so much as a pennyworth of pins, but what money he hath to bestow he must lay it out for ale. Yet it carries the name of 'St. James, his fair.' The multitude of rascal people that useth to frequent this fair are first accustomed to perform certain ceremonies at St. James' Well, in casting the water, backward and forward, on the right side and on the left, and over their heads, then, drinking a draught of the water, they go into the fair, and then, installing themselves in some brothel-booths, they sit and drink drunk all the day after.

"On the south side of the town they have St. Sunday's Well. I cannot tell what countryman St. Sunday was himself, but his well is of precious estimation amongst the Irish that do flock thither, so thick upon Sunday mornings in the summer season.

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lies to the south of the old church of Carran; Rock basin, called "a well," at Fahy, in the parish of Feakle; Well of St. Colan, at Tomgraney.

Tobercruhnorindowan, in Killard, is dedicated to the Creator of the world. Only one well. Toberisa, near Bunratty, is named after the Saviour. Three wells (Tobermurry) are dedicated to the Virgin, in Drimelihy Westby, Kilmacduane, and Killadysert "*St. John* has wells at Killone and Tromra. *St. Patrick* at Rossalia, Correen, and Clooney (Bunratty). *St. Martin* is patron of the wells at Moyarta, Ballynecally, and Lemaneagh. *St. Michael* at Kilbrecan, Cappa (Bunratty), and the Kilmihils. *St. Augustine* at Garrynaghry and Kilshanny. The *Holy Cross* at Gleninagh. *An Angel* at Kilcorney."

"The other wells we may group under their parishes:—*Kilfenora*, Toberdane; *Clooney* (Corcomroe), Tobermooghna; *Kilkeedy*, Tobereenatemple, near Templenadeirka and Tobercollure: *Dromeliff*, Tobernalettan and Toberateaskan; *Quin*, Toberlannive, Tobernachtin, Tobercrine, Toberaneeve, Toberkeeghaun, and Toberandillure; *Doora*, Toberdooran; *Templemaley*, Tobernacoolia; *Clooney* (Bunratty), Tobernalaghan, Tobercreile, Toberavannan; *Bunratty*, Tobernamarkauv; *Kilmurry-ne-gall*, Toberfailia; *Filfinaghta*, Tobernavogue; *Tulla*, Tobermacshane, in Uggoon, Toberbugvile, Toberknockall, and Toberslattery; *Moynoe*, Tobernagat: *Ogonnelloe*, Tobersraheen; *O'Brien's Bridge*, Tobernasool; *Kilfarboy*, Tobermurrish; *Kilmurray Ibrikean*, Tobernahallia and Tobervan; *Killballyowen*, Toberooan; *Kilrush*, Toberaneddan; *Kilmurry mac Mahon*, Toberyrowarta; *Kilfearagh*, Tobermanorha; *Killadysert*, Tobernamonastragh (Canon's Island)."

"To the southwards from the City of Dublin, they have St. Doblock's Well, another sanctified place, ceremoniously frequented at certain seasons, foolish and ridiculous to be spoken of. I might speak of divers other wells, but if I should speak of the wonders and miracles which they say are wrought there, it would make a more admirable history than that of Sir John Mandeville. It would undo all the physicians of England and Ireland. For at those holy wells, and at many other of those sanctified places, the blind are made to see, the lame are made to go, the cripple is restored to his limbs, or what disease soever, never so strange, never so inveterate, which is not there cured."

Well worship has died out in Dublin; the old popular religion connected with springs has ceased; you may question every man you meet in Nassau-street, and not one in a hundred would be able to tell you where to find the waters of St. Patrick's well which still flows on; the well would be as hard to discover as a spring in the desert.

In the townland of Ballymorereigh, parish of Dingle, county Kerry, is the well of Tobar Monachan, down to a late period much resorted to every Sunday in the year. "Fairy strokes" (*i.e.* paralysis) are supposed to be cured by drinking the waters. A local antiquary states, "there is not a better well in Munster to give rounds at, sure there is a salmon and an eel in it, and whoever has the luck to get a look at them, may be sure that they have the benefit of their rounds."

About four miles east of Baltinglass is the church-yard of Kilranelagh, the boundary wall of which is formed of loose stones, the top being very narrow in comparison with the base. Every man attending a funeral, brings a stone picked up on his way, and throws it on the fence. Outside this boundary is a well, with a recess in the wall just above it, furnished with ledges plentifully provided with wooden cups, as everyone interring in the graveyard the corpse of a child under five years of age, provides one of these vessels. It is believed that "the spirit of the latest interred, is obliged to supply every one of its predecessors with a cup of water, and to keep watch and ward over the sacred enclosure till the next funeral, and so when two convoys are approaching at the same time, there sometimes occurs unseemly races and struggles."

Dr. P. W. Joyce, in *Irish Names of Places*, remarks, that those afflicted with jaundice may be restored to health and colour by drinking water from the well of Toberboyoga, or the well of the Jaundice, near Kells, in Meath. Many wells alleged to be gifted with similar medicinal or healing properties, are called Boyaghan, but the above writer continues, "I must observe

that some of them may have been so called from the yellow colour of the clay or mud. Gortnasoolboy, in the parish of Cam in Roscommon, would seem to be connected in some way with this disease, as its most expressive name appears to indicate, the field of the yellow eyes."

The same writer remarks that "When children are wasting away in decline, they are bathed in the little lake called Loughaneeg, three miles south of Elphin, in Roscommon—*eug*, 'death,' applied here to a slow wasting disease; Loughaneeg, 'the lake of the decline.' The general restorative qualities of Toberanleise, near the river Barrow, in the townland of Dunganstown, parish of Whitechurch, Wexford, is indicated by its name—*Tobar-an-leighis*, 'the well of the cure' (*liagh*, a physician, *leigheas*, cure). The little lake of Loughanleagh, three miles east of Bailieboro' in Cavan, has been celebrated from time immemorial, for curing all kinds of cutaneous disease. Let the eruption be ever so virulent, the patient, who was bathed in this little pool, and afterwards treated with poultices of the mud, was sure to show a clean skin in a very few days. A good many years ago, unfortunately for the people of the neighbourhood, a gentleman who had a pack of hounds swam them in the water, which so offended the local guardian that the lake immediately lost its virtue, and has never since regained it. But still the name remains to tantalize the people with the memory of what they have lost—*Loch-an-liagha*, 'physician lake.' There are many small lakes called Loughanlea in various parts of the country, but it is pretty certain that in these cases the name means merely grey lake."

In some cases salt-water* appears to have been considered as efficacious as fresh water, for the Rev. Edward Chichester, A.M., when describing, in 1815, the parish of Cloncha, county Donegal, states that near Malin Head, there is a small hollow in a rock filled with sea-water at every tide, and reputed to possess a miraculous power of curing diseases, "consequently a serious nuisance to the neighbourhood, for it invites strollers and mendicants of the worst description from the three adjoining

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* "An unusual kind of holy well, viz., one in which salt water takes the place of fresh, is to be found in the case of the Chapel-Wells in Kirkmaiden parish, Wigtownshire, half way between the bays of Portankill and East Tarbet. About thirty yards to the north-west are the ruins of St. Medan's Chapel, partly artificial and partly natural, a cave forming the inner portion. In days gone by the spot was much frequented on the first Sunday of May (O.S.), called Co' Sunday, after this cave or cove. Dr. Robert Trotter, who examined the chapel and the wells in 1870, gives the results of the observations in the eighth volume of the *Proceedings* of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (new series)."—*Folklore of Scottish Lochs and Springs.* James M. MacKinlay, M.A., pp. 92-3.

counties, who infest the neighbourhood by their numbers, and corrupt it by their example. The patron days of the place are St. John's Eve and the Assumption of the Virgin, and they are celebrated there by the most disgusting drunkenness and debauchery."

The custom of holding "patterns" or "patrons," that is assemblies of country people, gathered originally to pay homage to the divinities of wells, or other local objects, afterwards for prayers and adoration of Christian saints, became a baneful source of vice. Those who came to pray, remained to drink and fight. Booths and tents were erected for selling whiskey as at fairs, pipers and fiddlers attended, and the evening and night were spent in singing, dancing, and drinking to such excess, "that it seems," remarks an eye-witness, "more like the celebration of the orgies of Bacchus, than the memory of a pious saint, from the drunken quarrels and obscenities practised on these occasions. So little is there of devotion, or amendment of life or manners, that these places are frequently chosen for the scenes of pitched battles, fought with cudgels, by parties, not only of parishes, but of counties, set in formal array against each other, to revenge some real or supposed injury, and murders are not an unusual result of these meetings."

Bishop Downes mentions that in the year 1700, there existed a tradition amongst the peasantry, that there had been formerly in the church-yard of Kineigh in the county Cork, "a well that had great medicinal virtues, and that the concourse of people being very chargeable to the inhabitants, they stopped it up."

The well of Toberkeelagh, situated on the western shore of Lough Mask, is overshadowed by a tall tree and bushes, on which pieces of rags are suspended; portions of hair are also frequently left, and the silvered locks of age may often be seen fluttering in the wind, with the fair tresses of some youthful votary. When sickness afflicts any of the peasantry in the neighbourhood of Toberkeelagh, or even any of their cattle, it is usual to pray, or perform stations for their recovery at the holy well. It is held in such respect by the people, that none of them will pass by without "making some reverence."

The holy well near the Abbey of Mothel, county Waterford, lies in a picturesque hollow. The loneliness of the spot, the offerings of rags, nails, buttons, pins, and the venerable tree with its branches hung with numerous locks of human hair, presented a typical specimen of the Irish Holy Well to a visitor who saw and described it in the year 1851.

Tubberkileilhe, in the townland of Ballyvooney, county Waterford, is also situated in a bare and lonely glen, through which a rivulet winds for about a quarter of a mile down to the sea-shore.

In a field, rising abruptly from the margin of the stream, the well issues from the surface of the ground. It is not covered by any building, neither is it shaded by the usual thorn or ash. Here are no votive offerings or pilgrims' relics, no ruined church or graveyard; it is not dedicated to any saint; no "patron" and no rounds are held here, yet it is esteemed sacred among the neighbouring peasantry. Afflicted persons come to wash their diseased limbs in its waters, which are also regarded as a specific for warts and tumours. The farmer on whose ground it is, had the well filled in; but the usual punishment befell him—he contracted a running-sore, which was not cured until he had the well re-opened.

According to ancient tradition, a sacred well once existed on the shore of Scattery Island possessed of miraculous curative powers; but, from some unexplained cause, knowledge of the site was lost. One day a lame young lad, going along the shore, suddenly sank in the sand. With much difficulty his comrades managed to extricate him, when to their amazement, they found that he walked quite sound. They at once perceived that the long-lost sacred well must have worked the cure, and cleared away the sand, till they came on some steps, and down below lay the clear, fresh water, uncontaminated by the salt of the sea.* People from far and near rushed to the well, and wonderful cures were effected; but next day not a vestige of the well could be found, as the waves had again covered it with sand, and it has never again been seen.

Another sacred spring, that of Tober-Kilnagreina, in the county Cork, was re-discovered about a hundred years ago. The farmer, who owned the land, carried off a large stone, with a natural hollow in the centre, which usually held water, to utilize as a drinking trough for his cattle. Not long after, his stock began to fail, and then all his children sickened. The farmer thought there was ill-luck in meddling with the stone; so he carried it back, and his cattle and his family were at once restored to health. He then had the place thoroughly examined, when he came upon an ancient stone circle, and in the midst was a well of fresh water, which, according to local tradition, had been cursed by St. Patrick. The country-side flocked to the well, and a "pattern" was organized. In course of time the revelry at the "pattern" gave occasion for much scandal, and drinking, dancing, gambling,

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* Lady Wilde states that "At Portrane, county Dublin, is a well called 'The Chink Well,' which, at high tide, is covered by the salt water, yet always remains itself fresh and pure. Anyone seeking a cure should leave a piece of bread on the brink of the well, and if this is carried away by the next tide, the disease will depart also along with it."

and fighting went on, until one day a man was killed in a faction fight. The well lost its miraculous powers; the maimed, the halt, and the blind prayed, went the rounds, and piled the stones as usual, but no help was vouchsafed. Worst sign of all, a great stone, on which a cross had been erected, fell down, of its own accord, and shattered the emblem of salvation. Then the people knew for certain that a curse was, indeed, again on the well, and they deserted it. Even the *Ban-Naomha*, who used to manifest herself to the regenerate under the form of a trout, disappeared; and, though she may still be seen at other sacred wells, she was never again beheld by those who watched for her re-appearance at this now unhallowed shrine.

In the year 1855, a visitor to the well of St. Bartholomew, at Pilstown, county Waterford, thus describes it :—" The venerable

Fig. 30.

St. Declan's Well, Ardmore, in the year 1830. From Mr. and Mrs. Hall's *Ireland*.

thorns which overshadow it bore a motley appearance, being covered with red, blue, and green ribbons, and rags, as if torn from the dresses of pilgrims, and tied up as a *finale* to their 'rounds' and prayers. An old crone engaged in going her 'rounds' said, 'they were tied up by each, to leave all the sickness of the year behind them.'" Fig. 30 represents St. Declan's Well, Ardmore, as it appeared in the year 1830.

In a *Statistical Account* of the parish of Dungiven, written in 1813, it is stated that at the well of Tubberpatrick, after performing the usual rounds, devotees wash their hands and feet in the water, and tear off a small rag from their clothes, which they tie on a bush overhanging the well; they then proceed to a large stone in the river, immediately below the old church, and,

having performed an oblation, they walk round the stone, bowing to it, and repeating prayers as at the well. They then enter the old church, within which a similar ceremony is performed, and they finish the rite by a procession and prayers round an upright stone, where the people show the print of footsteps which they say are those of St. Patrick.

At St. Bridget's Well, near Dundalk, the trees are also decorated with rags, and a stone in the stream bears the impression of St. Bridget's knees. At Dunass, county Clare, is a well noted for many healing virtues from having been blessed by St. Senan, who also left the impress of his knees on a flat rock near the

Fig. 31.

St. Senan's Well, County Clare. From a drawing by Dr. Petrie, made in the year 1840. Reproduced from the *Irish Penny Journal.*

brink. The country people kneel in these indentations as they stoop to drink, and find relief as they touch the impression left by the saint. The well presents nothing peculiar to distinguish it from a thousand other springs of the same kind, save the characteristic votive offerings made at it. These chiefly consist of wooden bowls, whole and fractured teacups, blacking-pots, and similar singular thank-offerings to the Patron Saint of the parish (fig. 31).

Near the old ruined church of Killalta, where Jeremy Taylor preached in the times of the Commonwealth, a station was held

on the 14th August. Mass was annually said at a heap of stones between the church and the lake, and the people afterwards went round the carn on their knees. A hollow is shown in the stone in the graveyard, said to be the impression of the saint's knees, containing water all the year round, and possessing the power of removing warts. Those who avail themselves of its curative properties, throw pins into the bulláns. Unbelievers affirm that instead of removing warts the water multiplies those disagreeable epidermal appendages; but, on the other hand, it has been explained, by a medical gentleman of great experience, that water thus found, being "as a rule highly acidulated by the decomposition of vegetable matter, when applied to eyes, or rather eyelids, affected by certain forms of irritation, may, not unfrequently, alleviate discomfort, and even effect a cure." The same superstition prevails in connection with the water of many holy-water fonts, and even of lakes. There is a natural boulder close to the old church of Templenaffrin, or the church of the mass, near Belcoo, county Fermanagh, on the top of which are three well-defined bulláns. The water almost invariably (as is natural in a moist climate) to be found in the hollows of bulláns is very generally supposed by the peasantry to possess miraculous curative powers, especially in diseases affecting the eyes, and it is also regarded as an infallible remedy for the removal of warts.

On the north side of the picturesque ruins of a church on the shores of Dublin Bay, there is a spring called St. Berach's Well, the water of which—of an astringent nature—is reputed as curative for affections of the eyes.

On Church Island, in Lough Beg, near Toome Bridge, are the ruins of a church, and near it a tree, with a number of rags tied to its branches. These are votive offerings of the faithful, who come to pray round a curious stone with a hollow in its surface, lying beneath the shade of the "Rag-tree."

W. H. Maxwell, in *Wild Sports of the West of Ireland*, describes an extraordinary being named Bobby, who lived at the foot of Croagh Patrick, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, "accounted the first 'performer' (religious) of his day in Connaught. He generally resided at the house of a neighbouring gentleman, and when a pilgrim-visitor was discouraged by the acclivity of the hill, or the quantity of prayers to be got over, Bobby, for a consideration, undertook and executed the task. He was not only a harmless, but as may be well imagined, a very useful personage, and his death has left a blank which has never yet been filled. The remains of poor Bobby, at his own request, were transported to the summit of the mountain and deposited on the apex of Croagh Patrick, where he had so often and so usefully 'performed.'"

The celebrated Struell wells, in the neighbourhood of Downpatrick, are supplied by a considerable spring, which flows through four small and very rudely constructed houses, at each of which the water is supposed to possess different virtues. The waters are most potent on the eve of mid-summer's day, when at midnight, crowds of mentally, as well as physically afflicted people, used to struggle for a drink.

The tree over the well at Cranfield, on the north shore of Lough Neagh, is decorated with rags, and at the well, near the old church of Faughart, there was formerly a skull from which visitors drank the waters of the spring.

Cambrensis—whom the romancer Keating describes as "an inexhaustible fund of falsehood"—when writing, in his seventh chapter, on the natural curiosities of Ireland, says, "there is a fountain in the province of Munster, which instantly makes the hair of the head grey when it is dipped into it; and that there is another fountain in Ulster of a quite contrary quality, that, upon wetting it, restores the hair to its genuine colour"; though, observes Keating, "upon a survey there are now no footsteps, nor even in the traditions of the people remaining of such wells, nor were they in the days of Cambrensis, who imposes upon the world with his fabulous rarities, and amuses his readers at the expense of his own credit and veracity."

In Aran, the wide-spread custom of praying and making offerings at the numerous holy wells on the Island, is still very common. At one, prayers for the sick are efficacious; at another, the water will not boil; at a third, dead fish put into the spring come to life again. At St. Eaney's Well, women pray to the saint for children, and men go through the same performance at a well not far distant, in which may be seen buttons, fish-hooks, bent pins, bits of crockery, nails, &c. and around it innumerable rags flutter in the breeze.

St. Conall's Well, near Bruckless, in the county Donegal, is situated, less than a mile from the sea, in a lonely part of the glen through which the Corker river flows. The spring is copious, and the overflow forms a small rill. No thorn overshadows the little basin, but the brambles which grow around it are decorated with rags and shreds of various colours.

Loughharrow is described—by a writer in the year 1836—as lying in the centre of a shaking bog, within six miles of Balla in Mayo. "To this lake they (the country people) bring large pieces of butter, and throw them therein to the saint of the lake, praying him to save their cattle that year. Here they have pipers, and fiddlers, and tents of every description in which whiskey is sold, and they dance round the lake and drink whiskey. Here parties, and families, and parishes, come to

fight and quarrel; here all manner of debaucheries are committed, and young people are corrupted. In the end they all bring home bottles of the lake water, and shake it among their cattle; and if any person become sick, some of it is spilled into his ears."

The waters of a small tarn, covering about ten acres, lying in a moory hollow in the parish of Kilmichael, county Cork, are considered sacred. Devout people were in the habit of coming

Fig. 32.

General view of Well and Altars at Tubbernalt, near Sligo.

on Saturday nights to perform rounds. The waters of the lake were then applied to such portions of the body as were crippled by rheumatism, for which complaint the water is a remedy.

The custom of carrying the water of celebrated holy wells to distant parts of the country, and then selling it, was a common trade. A correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* mentions "that about the year 1750 this was done in connection with a

miraculous spring near Sligo," most probably the well of Tubbernalt; and that some years earlier the water of another sacred spring "was sold in the district where he lived, at sixpence, eightpence, and tenpence per quart, according to the different success of sale the carriers had on the road."

At the proper season devotees can still be seen making their tour round the Well of Tubbernalt, on the shores of Lough Gill, not far from the town of Sligo. The spring is encircled by a wall, access to it being given by a few uneven steps, and below this spring there is another (fig. 32). Against the overhanging Alt, or cliff, is built an altar, and on Garland Sunday, it is gaily decorated with flowers (fig. 33).

Lammas Sunday,* in Irish *Domnach Crom Dubh*, anglicised

* "Let us now look at one other leading nature-festival, viz., Lammas, on the first day of August, to discover what light it throws on our subject. The Church dedicated the opening day of August to St. Peter ad Vincula. A curious mediæval legend arose to connect this dedication with another name for the festival, viz., the Gule of August. At the heart of this legend, was the Latin word Gula, signifying the throat. The daughter of Quirinus, a Roman tribune, had some disease of the throat, which was miraculously cured through kissing St. Peter's chains, and so the day of chains was designated the Gule of August. As a matter of fact, the word is derived from the Cymric Gwyl, a feast or holiday, and we have confirmation of the etymology in the circumstance that, in Celtic lands, the time was devoted to games, and other recreations. In Ireland, a celebrated fair, called Lugnasadh, was held at Tailtin (now Teltown), in Meath, for several days before and after the 1st of August; and there was another at Cruachan, now Rath Croghan, in Roscommon. A third was held at Carman, now Wexford. Its celebration was deemed so important, that, as Professor Rhys tells us, in his *Celtic Heathendom*, 'Among the blessings promised to the men of Leinster from holding it, were plenty of corn, fruit, and milk, abundance of fish in their lakes and rivers, domestic prosperity, and immunity from the yoke of any other province. On the other hand, the evils to follow from the neglect of this institution, were to be failure and early greyness on them and their kings.' In legendary accounts of Carman, the place has certain funeral associations. 'If we go into the story of the fair of Carman,' Professor Rhys observes, 'we are left in no doubt as to the character of the mythic beings, whose power had been brought to an end at the time dedicated to that fair. They may be said to have represented the blighting chills and fogs that assert their baneful influence on the farmer's crops. To overcome these and other hurtful forces of the same kind, the prolonged presence of the sun-god was essential, in order to bring the corn to maturity' (pp. 305-306). Professor Rhys bears further witness to the connection of Lammas rites with our present subject when he says:—'A similar shifting from the 1st of August to the first Sunday in that month has, I imagine, taken place in the Isle of Man. For, though the solstice used to be, in consequence, probably of Scandinavian influence, the day of institutional significance in the Manx summer, inquiries I have made in different parts of the island go to show that middle-aged people now living remember that, when they were children, their parents used to ascend the mountain very early on the 1st Sunday in August (O.S.), and that in some districts at least, they were wont to bring home bottles full of water from wells noted for their healing virtues'" (pp. 308, 309).—*Folklore of Scottish Lochs and Springs*, by James M. MacKinlay, M.A., F.S.A., Scot.

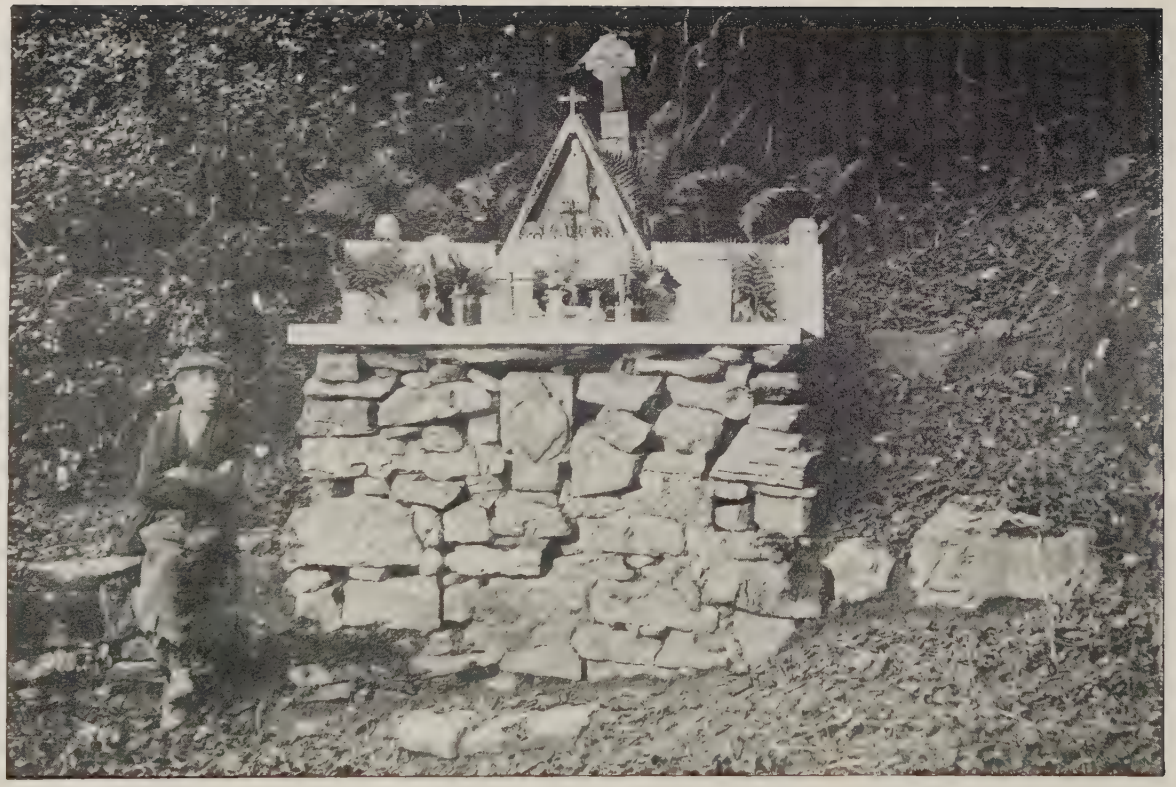

Fig. 33.

Altar at Tubbernalt. Photo by T. Kilgannon, Sligo. Decorated at certain seasons with ferns, &c., flowers, and fruit.

Garland Sunday, was, in its origin, apparently a pagan festival, in honour of the earth, now about to yield its offspring. The farmer fed his family on first fruits: no potatoes were dug before this time, and flowers and fruits were placed on the altars. In the *Book of Lismore* the word cpoʒam is explained as *Lughasa*—Anglicized Lammas, the designation of the first day of August. Lammas Sunday was a great festival with the people from the most ancient times, and according to Lady Wilde, was devoted by the Irish to solemn rites in honour of their dead kindred. "The garland, or hoop, was decorated the night before with coloured ribbons, but the flowers that encircled it, were not plucked till the morning of the great day, and only unmarried girls were allowed to gather the flowers and wreathe the garland, for the touch of a married woman's hand in the decorations was deemed unlucky. Then all the company proceeded to the churchyard, the finest young man in the village being chosen to carry the garland. From the topmost hoop some apples were suspended by their stalks, and if one dropped off during the procession, it was considered a lucky omen for the garland bearer, a prophecy of long life and success in love; but if an apple fell after the garland was set up in the graveyard, it was looked on as a sign of ill luck and coming evil, especially to those who were dancing at the time; for a dance always closed the festival."

Fig. 34.
Tobermonia, near Lough Arrow.

On Garland Sunday, on either side of the altar at Tubbernalt, may be seen two small framed and coloured glasses. Can this be a remnant of the pagan rite probably alluded to by the Apostle when he says "Now we see through a glass darkly." Fragments of cakes, pins and nails may be observed in the well

at certain periods, and the locality is, at all times, festooned with many coloured rags, red, blue, green, white, black, tied up to denote a finale to the rounds and prayers. (See *ante*, fig. 27).

Fig. 34 is a sketch of Tobermonia, a holy well picturesquely situated not far from Lough Arrow, in the county Sligo.

Fig. 35 is St. Molaise's Well, outside the walls of the cashel on the island of Inishmurray.

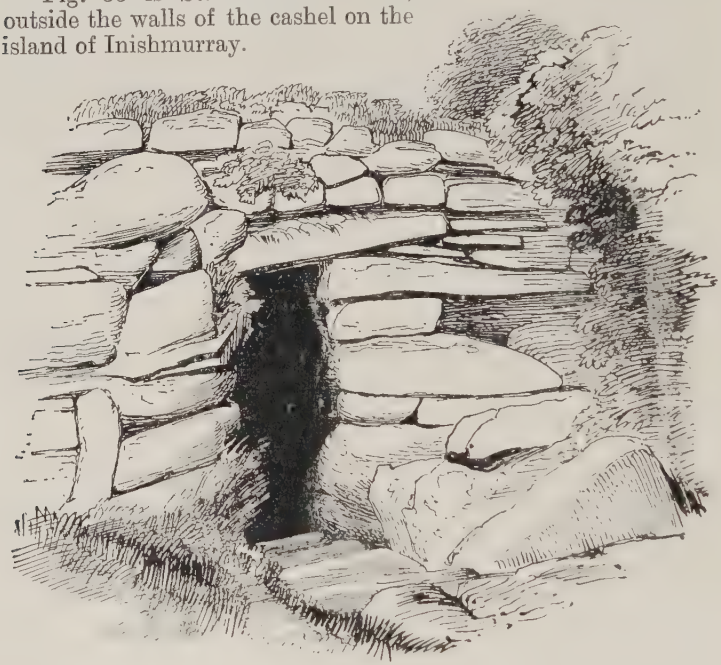

Fig. 35.

St. Molaise's (Molash's) Well, Island of Inishmurray. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

A rite, probably the most pagan in character still exercised in connexion with a holy well, is that connected with Tobernacoragh, or "The Well of Assistance" on Inishmurray. When tempestuous weather prevails, communication between the Island and the mainland is sometimes rendered impracticable even for weeks. On such occasions the waters of the spring are drained into the ocean, upon which (the charm rendered doubly certain by the repetition of certain

prayers) a holy calm succeeds the strife of the elements (fig. 36).

Beranger, in one of his tours through Ireland, at the close of the eighteenth century, refers to this "Well of Assistance," and further states that the inhabitants of Inishmurray "seem very innocent, good-natured, and devout, but, at the same time, very superstitious and credulous. They told us, as a most undoubted fact, that during the most horrid tempest of winter, where a case happens when a priest is required, such as to give the Extreme Unction to a dying person, &c., they go to the sea-side, launch one of their little vessels, and as soon as it touches the water a perfect calm succeeds, which continues until they have brought the priest to the island, that he had performed the rites of the Church, that they have carried him back, and that the boat is returned to the island and hauled on shore, when the tempest will again begin, and continue for weeks together. On asking them how often this miracle happened, and to which of them the care of the priest had been committed, they were veracious enough to confess it never happened in their days, though the fact was true."

Fig. 36.
Well of Assistance, Island of Inishmurray. [A Wind-well.

Wells could produce a favourable breeze as well as allay a storm. When a strange boat was wind-bound on the Island of Gigha, the master of the craft used to give money to one of the natives to procure a favourable wind, and the practice, as here carried on, closely resembles the ceremony on the Island of Inishmurray. "A few feet above the well was a heap of stones, forming a cover to the spring. These were carefully removed, and the well was cleared out with a wooden dish, or a clam-shell. The water was then thrown several times towards the point from which the needed wind should blow. Certain words of incantation were used each time the water was thrown. After the ceremony the stones were replaced, as the district would otherwise have been swept by a hurricane."

Philip Dixon Hardy, in *Holy Wells of Ireland*, recounts how, amongst the multitudes which resorted to the holy well of Aughawale, near Croagh Patrick, in the beginning of the nineteenth

century, a very similar custom prevailed, for if "there be any in war with their neighbours, they take up a flag which is called Columbkille's slate; this they turn upside down in the name of that saint, and then return home and fast fifteen days, taking nothing but bread and water once in the twenty-four hours; this they do in honour of St. Columbkille and to induce him to put the person or persons who have injured them to death. But if that does not do, they return to the well again, and go round their station about it backwards, and turn the flag upside down. If stormy weather happen, either in spring or harvest, the whole country will say that it was because Columbkille's slate was turned, and they will even watch in harvest to prevent the people from turning it."

O'Donovan describes a mysterious cursing-stone on Caher Island, esteemed, next to Inisglora, the most holy island in that part of Connaught, and which possesses a small church, called *Teampull na naomh* by some, and *Teampull Phadruig* by others. There are several penitential monuments around it, at which the pilgrims pray and go through their "circumgyrating" round. To the east of the east gable of the church, there is a stone, inscribed with a cross, called *Leabaidh Phadruig*, which is prayed at during the station.

"Within the church, and laid on the altar, is a far-famed stone called *Leac na naomh*, *i.e.* the *flag of the saints*. It is of a roundish form, about two feet in diameter, and composed of different kinds of stones, which appear as if they had been artificially cemented together; but the compound is, however, the work of nature. Whenever persons on the west shore, or on the islands in the vicinity of Caher, find themselves aggrieved or scandalized openly and wrongfully, they have always recourse to the miraculous powers of this stone *to elicit the truth*. They first fast and pray at home for a fixed time, imploring that God, through the intercession of St. Patrick, and the other saints, who blessed this *flag*, would show that they were *wronged* on such occasions; and, after the fasting and praying are over, they sail over to the Caher and *turn Leac na naomh*. After the flag is *turned*, the weather immediately becomes unfavourable, and storms and hurricanes most frequently ensue, to the great destruction of boats and curraghs, and some event is ere long brought about which shows clearly to the eyes of all the neighbours that the character of the person who turned the *Leac* had been unjustly and wrongfully attempted to be blackened. This may be shown in various ways, such as some great misfortune happening to the scandalizer, or, in case of theft, the real thief being discovered, &c."

On the island of Iniskea, off the west coast of Ireland, there was formerly a small, flat stone, called the *neewoge*, or little saint,

treated with great reverence, which used to procure favourable winds. It was usually kept enveloped in a cloth, yearly removed and renewed. Public attention having been directed to the fetish, the parish priest, it is stated, had it cast into the sea. The islanders allege they never knew misfortune or hunger, until after the disappearance of their *neewoge*.

The anvil of the blacksmith (the ancient *caird*) is still a most potent spell-worker, and appears to have possessed many of the properties of the cursing-stone. The ceremony of "turning the anvil," like the ceremony of "turning the cursing-stones," is not lightly to be attempted; for the smith must rise before the sun, go naked to his forge, turn the anvil nine times, striking it a specified number of blows with his sledge each time he turns it. This he must repeat for nine consecutive mornings, when the desired result, generally violent rain-storms, or ill-luck to his neighbour, is produced. Fortunately there is nothing which makes the performance of this ceremony either easy or agreeable; and further, as the postulant must keep strict fast during the nine days, the charm, like the use of the cursing-stones, is to some extent safe-guarded from impetuous malevolence.

The name for God and that for wind are not unfrequently identical. Where the Authorized Version reads, "The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth," the Vulgate reads, "The Spirit breathes where He will and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh and whither He goeth." In the Mosaic account of Creation, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; which the Targum of Onkelos paraphrases, "And a wind from before the Lord blew upon the face of the waters." The Creek Indians call their chief deity the "Master of breath," or "wind"; and an Aztec god with an unpronounceable name meant "the wind of night." Odin, the Scandinavian god, signifies, it is stated, "the raging gale."

The well-known habit amongst sailors, of whistling for a wind —a soft whistle for a breeze, a loud one for a gale—is fast dying out in these days of almost universal steam. Scratching the mast on the side from which the breeze is wanted, or throwing a small coin overboard in the same direction, are apparently pagan survivals of the idea of propitiating the gods by a sacrifice, while the presence of a black cat on the ship is a positive invitation to the saints to send violent storms, shipwreck, and disaster. According to Herodotus, Menelaus sacrificed two young children to procure favourable winds.

Some of the natives of New Guinea have strange, but very similar ideas, on this subject. Favourable winds are carried on

board their canoes in an earthenware pot, and while on a voyage, if a banana be eaten, the skin must, on no account, be thrown overboard for fear of offending the spirits of the deep, who would also be aroused if cocoa-nut shells, after the milk had been drunk, were tossed into the sea.

The ceremonies attached to Irish wind-wells are but the remnant of druidical cult; the druids appear to have also claimed the power to make or withhold rain, to dry up rivers, or to cause springs to burst forth. There is a good example of this in a tale in the *Book of Leinster*, of an expedition made by Cormac Mac Art against the king of Munster. The scene is laid in the commencement of the third century. The king of Ireland consulted his druids as to the best and most expeditious means of bringing the men of Munster to terms. The druids informed the monarch that the surest mode of reducing his enemies was to deprive them and their cattle of water, and forthwith, by their spells and incantations, they dried up all the springs, rivers, and lakes of the district. In this extremity the king of Munster called to his assistance a yet more powerful druid than any in the service of the Irish monarch. Upon receiving the promise of a large reward, this arch-druid consented to go to the king of Munster's relief. Upon his arrival the druid shot an arrow into the air, foretelling that water, in abundance, would spring up wherever the missile descended; and a rushing torrent burst forth where the barbed head entered the earth. If anyone doubt this story he has but to visit the parish of *Imleach Grianan*, in the county of Limerick, where the well designated the "the well of the great spring" still remains.

The strange spectacle of rival druids striving with each other to obtain a preponderating influence with the gods, finds repetition in many biographies of early Irish saints, where we often notice that rival saints had, although on opposite sides, a sort of influence which could not be altogether ignored by the Almighty.

Wells often contained trout, salmon, and eels. Trout were considered holy, and were not eaten; but eels appear to have been eaten; and salmon, under certain circumstances, were eagerly sought after. Holy trout, of peculiar form and colour, were confined to holy wells; the hazel-tree and the salmon seem to have been indissolubly connected with certain larger springs; the salmon watched the nuts on the hazel, and when they dropped into the water devoured them greedily. Their bellies became spotted with a ruddy mark for every nut they had eaten; on this account the spotted salmon became an object of eager acquisition, for whoever eat one became, immediately, without the trouble of studying, a learned scholar, or an eloquent poet.

Dr. P. W. Joyce's account of the origin of "Finn's Tooth of Knowledge," exemplifies this curious belief regarding the magic properties possessed by some salmon.

"It had been prophesied, of old, that a man named Finn would be the first to eat of the salmon of knowledge, which swam in the pool of Linn-Fee, in the Boyne (near the present village of Slane); and that he would thereby obtain the gifts of knowledge and of divination. A certain old poet, named Finn, knowing this, hoped that he might be the lucky man; so he took up his abode on the shore of Linn-Fee; and he fished in the pool every day from morn till night, in the hope of catching the salmon of knowledge. At this time, Finn, the son of Cumal, was a boy, fleeing, from place to place, from his hereditary enemies, the Clann Morna, disguised, and bearing the name of Demna; and, happening to come to Linn-Fee, the old poet took him as his servant.

"After long watching and waiting, Finn hooked the salmon, at last, and gave it to Demna to broil, warning him very strictly not to eat or even taste of it. Demna proceeded to broil the fish; and soon the heat of the fire raised a great blister from its side, which the boy pressed with his thumb, to keep it down, thereby scalding himself so severely that he, unthinkingly, thrust his thumb into his mouth.

"When the salmon was cooked, the poet asked Demna had he eaten of it: 'No,' replied the boy, 'but I scalded my thumb on the fish, and put it into my mouth.' 'Thy name is not Demna, but Finn,' exclaimed the poet: 'in thee has the prophecy been fulfilled; and thou art now a diviner and a man of knowledge.'"

"In this manner Finn obtained the gift of divination, so that, ever after, when he wished to look into futurity, he put his thumb under his tooth of knowledge, as he did when cooking the salmon of Linn-Fee, and the whole future was revealed to him. There appears to have been some sort of ceremony used, however, and it would seem that the process was attended with pain, so that it was only in very solemn and trying occasions he put his thumb under his tooth of knowledge."

Fig. 37 represents the famous well and station of St. Keeran, situate about two miles from Kells, in the county Meath. The little stream, shown in the illustration, comes from the well, which is always bright and sparkling, and, remarks Mr. W. F. Wakeman, "Certainly, at times, contains lusty trout, whether 'enchanted' or otherwise I cannot say. Some of these fish I have myself seen, and Sir William Wilde saw them also. He describes them as being about half a pound in weight; those which I noticed were considerably smaller. The people look

upon them as very sacred. The ash, over the well, is the largest of its kind I have ever beheld. Some sixty years ago word was passed through the country that it was *bleeding*, and thousands of people flocked to the well to behold the miracle with their own eyes. I believe that a reddish stain did actually appear, extend-

Fig. 37.

Well of St. Keeran, near Kells, celebrated for its sacred trout.

ing from the lower fork all down the stem. This was supposed to be owing to an overflow of decayed vegetable matter, which had been deposited in a cavity in its trunk."

Many holy wells were formerly celebrated for their sacred trout of peculiar form and colour. One side of each fish was

darker than the other, and on it might be observed strongly defined marks, which, according to tradition, were accounted for in the following manner :—The progenitors of these fish had been caught, by unbelievers, and placed on a gridiron to fry. No sooner, however, had they touched the iron than they were mysteriously transported back again into the cooling waters of the sacred spring, but they still retain marks of the fire and of the gridiron.

Whether we regard the monumental slabs of the ancient palaces and temples of Babylon and of Nineveh, or the walls of the Catacombs of Rome, where the early Christians sought refuge from the fury of their persecutors, representations of the fish, an emblem of fecundity, are alike prominent. The God of the Philistines of Ashdod evidently resembled the fish-figure on Assyrian sculptures and cylinders :—

> "Dagon his name, sea-monster, upward man
> And downward fish."

The fish is stated, by Christian writers on the Roman Catacombs, to be a symbol expressive of the name of Christ, but the appropriateness of the symbol did not stop here, for Tertullian observes :—"The fish seems a fit emblem of Him whose spiritual children, like the offspring of fishes, are born in the water of baptism." Fish veneration is of Eastern origin, for it is known that, in certain parts of China, India, Persia, and Africa, there are wells attached to temples in which sacred fish are fed by the priests. Many travellers have been struck by this circumstance, and instances innumerable might be quoted : however, one will suffice. Near Tripoli there is what is called a convent of sacred fish : a large and lofty building with snow-white dome. A large sycamore stands by the edge of a tank filled with water, clear as crystal. Here may be seen a great number of Moslem boys assembled to feed the sacred fish, and the old guardian of the place has great faith in his piscine charge ; he says they are all inhabited by the souls of Moslem saints.

In the well of Tubber Tullaghan, county Sligo, there is a brace of trout, not visible to ordinary eyes, but which people still living declare they have seen. The well, near the summit of a lofty rock, accounted one of the wonders of Ireland, is mentioned in the *Dinsenchus* and by Nennius, Cambrensis, O'Flaherty, and numerous other writers. The water, neither clear nor tempting, covered with an oil-like scum, and full of minute weeds, has a slightly brackish flavour. The country people assert that the water-level often suddenly rises and falls : a circumstance not uncommon, however, in springs in a limestone district. That, like the Tubbernalt, Tubberkeeran, and Cong

trout, the Tubber Tullaghan examples were enchanted, is established beyond the possibility of doubt, if we credit current stories to the effect that they have been taken, cooked, and eaten without apparent inconvenience to themselves, as may be inferred from the fact that they were immediately afterwards observed as lively as ever in their accustomed haunt.

In the present day, fish worship is believed to be almost extinct; but within the nineteenth century a gentleman of the county Sligo, who caught some sacred fish, was detected by the country people, and obliged to run for his life to escape from a mob of infuriated peasants. Not long ago women and children were observed throwing bread into the well of Tubbernalt near Sligo. Inquiries as to their object in doing this elicited the explanation that they were feeding the sacred trout in the well, which were, however, invisible except to the eyes of the faithful. Any person who will take the trouble to examine carefully a few holy wells will find pieces of bread in the water, thrown in as offerings to their sacred piscine inhabitants. Lady Wilde in *Ancient Legends* states that a man born blind recited, to attentive listeners, how he had been made to see, by using the waters of this sacred well of Tubbernalt. "Oh, look on me," he said; "I was blind from my birth, and saw no light till I came to the blessed well; now I see the water and the speckled trout down at the bottom, with the white cross on his back." When his auditors heard that he could see the speckled trout, which was invisible to them, they of course at once believed in the cure.

In the commencement of the nineteenth century it was customary for pilgrims to the sacred mountain of Croagh Patrick, in Mayo, after having performed a station, to enter the holy well of Aughawale, "in which are three trouts; they pick up baits and throw them into the water, and it is the most lucky omen in the world to them if a trout come out and eat the bait, but if not, they cry out to St. Columbkille to send them out. If they do not appear, there is some misfortune to come upon them, with loss of friends and relations."

There were, in former times, several "station days" in the year at the sacred lake of Loughadrine, in the county Cork. The trout in the lake on being boiled, turned into blood. The devotees flung bread and biscuits into the water to these holy fishes, saying at the same time certain prayers. On such occasions one could take up basketsful of bread out of the lake. Cures of every kind were effected by the potency of the waters, and as usual, the period of devotion was always closed by revelry.

Dion Cassius says the Caledonians of his time never tasted fish, although their lakes and rivers furnished an inexhaustible

supply. In later times "fish eaters" was one of the contemptuous epithets which the Scottish Highlanders applied to the Saxons of the Lowlands.

In ancient times one of the greatest indignities a conqueror could inflict upon an Irish chief was the destruction of his holy fish. For example, O'Conor, king of Connaught, in the commencement of the eleventh century, wishing to insult his vanquished foes, the O'Briens, caught and ate the sacred salmon in the well of Kincora.

In a climate so moist as that of Ireland, it hardly seems natural that water and water-wells should be objects of devotion; and the many instances of the cult which even still exist seem a confirmation of the traditions which trace the early religion of the land to an Oriental source; for although not valuable in the West, wells were extremely valuable in the East, and if some of the original population of this country came from oriental lands they would carry with them the idea of well-worship. This would account for the apparent incongruity of the worship of water in a country abundantly supplied, overspread with a sullen sky, heavy and saturated with moisture—and it is only consonant with human nature that the after-guardians of these springs preferred turning them to gain, to turning the people away from them:—

> ". . This may be superstition, weak or wild,
> But even the faintest relicks of a shrine
> Of any worship, wake some thoughts divine."

Edward Clodd, F.R.A.S., is however of opinion that the universality of water-worship is otherwise and more easily accounted for, as "what seemed so full of life, and therefore, to early man's reason, so full of spirits, as rivers, brooks, and waterfalls? To him it was the water-demon that made the river flow so fast as to be dangerous in crossing, and that curled the dreaded whirlpool in which life was sucked."

The area over which well-worship extends is of surprising magnitude, and it is impossible to believe that so singular a custom could have arisen independently in all these countries. Burton says it extends from east to west, throughout Northern Africa; Mungo Park mentions it in West Africa; he observed a tree which presented a "very singular appearance, being decorated with innumerable rags or strips of cloth." Baker speaks of it on the confines of Abyssinia; Burton also found the custom in Arabia, during his pilgrimage to Mecca, where the holy-well Zem-Zem disputes, with the Black Stone in the Kaaba, the honour of being the most sacred thing in the holy city; some

writers even hold that it, rather than the Black Stone, is the original cause of Mecca becoming a holy place in the eyes of the old heathen Arabs. The spring is perennial, and the water, like the well of Tubber Tullaghan in the county Sligo, already mentioned, is slightly brackish, containing alkaline constituents, so that it is an aperient spring; the pilgrims thus combine hygiene with religion, as one of their chief duties is to drink freely of the holy water.

In Persia, Sir William Ouseley saw trees covered with offerings of rags. Hanway mentions a tree he observed in the same country, in the immediate vicinity of a well, to which were affixed a number of rags left there, as health-offerings by persons afflicted with ague. In Ceylon, Colonel Lewis says that the trees in the neighbourhood of wells may be seen covered with scraps of clothing; and Huc describes this practice as existing among the Tartars. A curious usage prevails among the Shokas, by which they arrange for the ascent of their prayer by wind-power, and the custom appears to resemble the Irish practice of tying rags on trees round holy wells. These Shokas' mechanical prayers are simply enough contrived :—"A certain number of rags or pieces of cloth, usually white, but occasionally red and blue, are fastened by one end to a string, and then hung across a road, pass, or path. On crossing a pass, for the first time, Shokas invariably tear off a strip of cloth and place it so that it will flap in the breeze, and when materials for a new dress are purchased or manufactured, it is customary for them to tear off a narrow strip of the cloth and make a flying prayer of it. While there is motion in the strips there is prayer, so that the natives tie them very fast to sticks, poles, or branches. Certain shrubs and trees in weird poetic spots in the mountains are covered with these religious signs. Moreover, on the top of nearly every shop, house, or habitation, similar little flags can be seen, and innumerable ones are secured near their shrines and at the outer gates of the village."

Can this be the origin of the world's flags and standards, for example the English flag, the cross of St. George, "carrying the aid of St. George, and invoking Heaven by its fluttering?"

In the New World, Tylor observed in Mexico, an enormous cypress festooned with votive offerings of the Indians, hundreds of locks of coarse black hair, teeth, shreds of coloured cloth, rags and pieces of ribbon. It is thus seen that the custom of well-worship and of rag offerings, is of world-wide extent.

Even though they but seldom effected a cure, holy wells in Ireland retained, nevertheless, their popularity, and the country-people continued to believe in them, and sought their aid. The secret of their continuance in power lay in their appeal to the

imagination. Reason might suggest that it is absurd to expect that ailments could be thus removed, but imagination replied that there are many more things in heaven and in earth than are at present dreamed of. The strict silence observed—in all pagan mystic ceremonies, particularly in seeking for hidden treasure, silence was essential, for

> "... if a word thou utter,
> It vanishes again."

—the rites to be gone through, the leaving of a gift to an invisible power, the restriction of the ritual to a certain defined season, all appealed strongly to the imagination, and surrounded well-worship with a strange atmosphere of mysticism that acted on the great fund of credulity latent in human nature.

In conclusion, may we not all echo the sentiment of the poet, that if at these wells,

> "..... one holy thought
> In man's deep spirit of old hath wrought;
> If peace to the mourner hath here been given,
> Or prayer from a chastened heart to heaven,
> Be the spot still hallowed while time shall reign,
> Who hath made thee Nature's own again."

CHAPTER IV.

ANIMAL WORSHIP, BIRDS, AND AUGURY.

Barrier between the brute and man is language—In popular tales the supposed link between man and the animal kingdom hardly ever relegated to a subordinate position—Ancient belief that certain families were endowed with the power of assuming the form of animals—The Were Wolf—Wolf Lore—Watersprites—"The Master Otter"—Witches assume the appearance of Hares—Supernatural Cats—Cat Lore—Cow Lore—Swine Lore—Magical Boars—Divining by the Blade Bone—Augury—"The Merry Thought"—Omens—Means adopted to obtain Magical Prescience—Belief in Dreams—Auguries drawn from the appearance or flight of birds—Rook—Starling—Blackbird—Robin—Crane—Cuckoo—Raven—Hen—Cock—Swallow—Water Wagtail—Swan—Barnacle-Goose—Peacock—Magpie—Wren—Various Ancient kinds of Divination—Omens regarding Sneezing.

Like many other pagan nations, the old Irish invested even the lowest forms of animal life with the power of influencing the actions of men. This species of worship is an advance on the veneration of trees, stones, or other inanimate objects. It endows animals, birds, and even fishes with thought and language, regarding them as somewhat like human beings, but under a different exterior; then, in course of time, they are supposed to possess supernatural powers; they become in the thoughts of their worshippers the ancestors of the tribe, and finally their protecting gods. Animal worship, in ancient Egypt, was probably a survival of this worship.* Traces of it are still apparent amongst the aborigines of Australia, America, and many other localities.

The natives of Australia look upon themselves as of one kind with their beasts, their birds, their fishes. In these are to be

* Professor Goldwin Smith is of a contrary opinion, he states that "in Egypt, Sacerdotalism was strongly developed. The natural phenomena were highly impressive, while the people apparently were weak and open to impressions. Up to a certain point the priests appear to have been ministers of progress; . . . they became reactionary, and were aided in the reaction by the isolation of the country. Animal symbolism degenerated into animal worship, culminating in Apis. This probably was the true account rather than Fetishism, the existence of which, apart from symbolism, appears to be doubtful." *Contemporary Review*, No. 420, p. 900.

found some of the most extraordinary forms of life that have struggled through, or more probably have escaped ordeals, that, in other parts of the globe, have weeded out the unfit. Just as this savage race is still in the Stone Age, which we have left thousands of years behind, so it is also, as we have seen, a race which has not risen above the most primitive ideas with regard to spirits in inanimate objects, as well as in animals, birds, and fishes. The aborigines of Australia show us what our remote ancestors really were like; we represent what it is to be hoped the Australians' remote descendants may possibly become. Yet these savages, who seem lower than the beasts in improvidence, who live their entire life without a roof to shelter them, or clothing to cover them, who are higher only than the beasts in their use of articulate speech and of flint implements, have nevertheless evolved a most complex unwritten marriage law and the most elaborate religious ceremonies of almost any savage folk. Here, amidst a Tertiary survival, the legends of the aborigines reflect what casual observers might describe as a childlike, or, shall we not rather style it, Pantheistic conception of Creation, a perhaps even Tertiary surviving form of worship of the Great Unknown.

> "There lives and works
> A soul in all things, and that soul is God."

A dim conception of this is at bottom of all mythologies which peopled nature with living spirits; but the mind of primitive man could not conceive abstract notions; the powers of nature were regarded by him as concrete objects, and were consequently designated as persons.

The term "totem" is borrowed from the language of one of the many tribes which lived around the region of Lake Superior; for with North American Indians the meaning of the idea expressed by the totem is more clearly defined than among other people who use totemic emblems. It is impossible to say what governs the choice of a totem, but as a rule the animal, bird, fish, tree, or object so chosen, is considered sacred, and acts the role of a tutelary saint whose business it is to guard each member of the family carrying its representation.

There are many evidences of the former supposed influence of the brute creation upon human life in Ireland, and of their interference in human affairs. The peasantry were under the belief that animals, more particularly domesticated animals, were cognizant of all their affairs, and could even read their thoughts; but it was fatal to ask a question of them; for if they replied, the interrogator dropped dead. To the peasantry, as well as to most people, the position of animals in the great life-scheme is full of mystery; gifted with intelligence, and yet dumb as regards

to them intelligent modes of expressing their ideas, they seemed to contain imprisoned spirits, suffering punishment for some act committed in a former state of existence, and to be passing through a cycle of expiation, at the termination of which they will be again promoted to human status.

Scientists allege that the great barrier between the brute and man is language—that man speaks, but that no brute, no bird has ever uttered a word (Balaam's ass, and parrots, &c., it is presumed, are excepted), and that language is the rubicon across which no brute has passed. This assertion of course depends on the definition which may be given to the meaning of the term language; for horses, dogs, cats, and birds, &c., utter sounds which are akin to language, as they are purposely uttered, made by one beast or bird, with the specific intention of imparting to another beast or bird a particular meaning, and these sounds, varied in the note in which they are uttered, are frequently made to regulate the action of the auditors. The border-land between man and the brute creation is therefore narrower than is generally allowed; not that it can be crossed at will by superior intellect or supernatural will-power as was formerly imagined.

In the popular tales of the peasantry the supposed link between man and the animal kingdom is hardly ever relegated to a subordinate position, and in most stories animal transformation occupies a prominent place.

There was, in Ireland, an ancient belief that certain races or families were endowed with the power of assuming the form of wolves whenever they pleased, and it is gravely recorded that, in A.D. 690, a wolf was heard speaking with a human voice. When thus transformed they committed depredations amongst flocks and herds, after the manner of wolves; if their human bodies which their spirits quitted on these expeditions were moved, the spirit would not be able to again enter them; if wounded whilst abroad, the same wounds would be apparent on their human as on their wolfish bodies; and, if killed, the raw flesh they had been tearing in the fields would be found between the teeth of the dead human bodies. Giraldus Cambrensis, who only repeats older Irish legends, places one of these tribes in Ossory. This idea was also held by the ancients. In a sentence that might have been penned by an Irishman, Herodotus thus mentions the Neuri:—"Still more remote are the Neuri, whose country, towards the north as far as I have been able to learn, is totally uninhabited."* In later times Mela says of this people (Book II., 1), that they possessed the power of transforming

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* *Melpomene*, xvii.—"τούτων δὲ κατύπερθε οἰκέουσι Νευροί. Νευρῶν δὲ τὸ πρὸς βορῆν ἄνεμον ἐρῆμος ἀνθρώπων, ὅσον ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν."

themselves into wolves, and resuming their former shape at pleasure.* In the strange pamphlet entitled *Beware the Cat*, the story is given in much the same words as those of Giraldus, and is to the effect that "there is also in Ireland one nation (tribe) whereof some one man and woman are, at every seven years' end, turned into wolves and so continue in the woods the space of seven years, and if they hap to live out which time, they return to their own form again. And other twain are turned for the like time into the same shape, which is penance (as they say enjoined that stock by St. Patrick for some wickedness of their ancestors) and that this is true witnessed, a man whom I left alive in Ireland who had performed this seven years' penance, whose wife was slain while she was a wolf in her last year. This man told to many men whose cattle he had worried and whose bodies he had assailed while he was a wolf, so plain and evident tokens, which showed such scores of wounds which other men had given him, both in his man's shape before he was a wolf, and in his wolf's shape since, which all appeared upon his skin, that it was evident to all men, yea, and to the bishop (upon whose grant it was recorded and registered), that the matter was, undoubtedly, past peradventure."

The "were-wolf" was a human being with an uncontrollable craving for human flesh—who, by magical arts, assumed at will the form of a wolf, in order, the more readily, to gratify this unnatural appetite—possessed of the strength and all other powers of the brute, while retaining his human faculties. This transformation was, however (as already represented) in some cases involuntary, being the punishment for crime. Thus, Vereticus, a king of Wales, was changed into a wolf, through the curse of St. Patrick. A similar curse, by a saint of lesser degree, rested on an Irish family, each member of which, male and female, was subject to the horrible doom, that, at some period of life, he or she was forced to assume the form and habits of a wolf, and thus remain for seven years ere resuming his or her place among fellow-mortals. Almost the same legend is related by Pliny, who recounts how, each year a member of a certain family was chosen by lot, and, on the festival of Jupiter Lycæus, was led to the brink of the Arcadian lake, into which he plunged. He was instantly transformed into a wolf, under which form he continued for nine years, when he returned to his family somewhat aged in appearance, but otherwise none the worse for his lupine experiences. Ovid records another mythological instance, how Lycaon, King of Arcadia, presuming to test the omniscience of

* Neuris statum singulis tempus est, quo si velint in lupos, interumque in eos qui fuere mutentur.

Jupiter by placing before him a dish of human flesh (St. Patrick, in similar manner, had cooked cats and dogs set on the table for him to eat), was straightway transformed by Jupiter into a wolf—a terror to his pastoral subjects. Herodotus tells of sorcerers who, once a year, had the power of assuming the semblance of wolves. Norwegian and Icelandic Sagas are full of references to lycanthropy, as this form of magic is called, and treat of it in all its various developments. In some cases the transformation was effected by merely assuming the skin of a real wolf; but, in general, a charm was employed which, while involving no actual change in the human body, caused all beholders to imagine that they really saw a wolf.

In olden days, from the forest-clad hills and mountains of Erin:—

> "Cruel as death and hungry as the grave,
> Burning for blood, bony and gaunt and grim,
> Assembling wolves in raging troops descend."

Yet, if credence is to be given to the following anecdote, wolves were a much maligned race:—A Sligo Androcles found a young wolf lying on the ground moaning and in great apparent agony. On examination, he found in the wolf's foot a great thorn, which he extracted, and he then tended the animal till its recovery. One morning the man missed his patient, and heaped curses on the truant's head; but, imagine his astonishment, when, shortly after, the grateful beast was seen re-appearing in company with another wolf, driving between them a fine fat cow, which they placed, unharmed before the poor man's hut. The finding of the cow was proclaimed at all the chapels; but it is needless to add that the laudable endeavour to discover a lawful owner was unsuccessful, or that, finally, the poor man, by his own industry and the assistance of the wolves, became the wealthiest farmer in the district.

The following legend, current in the county Sligo, is an *olla-podrida* of the supernatural—of wolves and water-sprites. Near the Hill of Kesh, close to the village of Ballymote, was born Cormac Mac Art, the celebrated King of Ireland. His mother had been warned by a Druid that if her child were born under a certain planet, and at a certain hour, some misfortune would assuredly befall him. One day, her husband and his retainers being all absent at the chase, she suddenly remembered that there was no water to cook the spoils of the hunters on their return, and proceeded to the townland of Cross to draw water from a well, since called Tobercormac. She walked leisurely, but had scarce reached halfway to the well when, at the disastrous hour foretold, she gave birth to her infant, and had sufficient

forethought to cut from the little toe of the infant's right foot a piece of flesh, as a private mark whereby to recognize her child. Whilst she was in a fainting condition, the child was taken from her arms by a were-wolf, and carried off to a cave, where, like a second Romulus, he was suckled by the wolf till about twelve months old, at which time he was observed essaying to walk by placing his hands on the wolf's back for support. The father of Cormac's mother, with whom she then lived, caused some flesh to be roasted near the cave, when the wolves, attracted by the appetising scent, rushed to the spot, leaving the infant behind; by this artifice the chief was enabled to capture the boy, and his daughter at once recognised him as her lost son, on observing the mark on his toe.

At the time that Cormac had grown to manhood, the head-chief of the district, a great tyrant called Mac Con, kept men to guard and watch over him during the night, and these guards were constantly found dead in the morning. At length it fell to the lot of Cormac to keep watch over his chief. Aware that Mac Con was the reputed offspring of a water-sprite, and, consequently, unable to close both eyes at night unless near water, Cormac, on pretence of washing his hands, called for a basin of water, which he placed surreptitiously under the tyrant's bed, so that he slept soundly through the night. By this means Cormac was enabled to observe a vast multitude of water-sprites, who, being of like nature as Mac Con, were in the habit of paying him nocturnal visits; and on these occasions, assisted as supposed by Mac Con himself, frequently killed the night-guards. Cormac, however, succeeded in slaying all the sprites, and on the following morning recounted the occurrence to Mac Con before witnesses, declaring that he was but "half human." Mac Con was on the point of putting Cormac to death when, to save his innocent life, Mac Con's own mother acknowledged the truth. Mac Con thereupon resigned his position as chief, was never more heard of, and was succeeded by Cormac, the rightful heir, who afterwards became King of Tara—so runs the Sligo legend.

W. H. Maxwell, in his *Wild Sports of the West of Ireland*, states that the peasantry believe that animals of extraordinary formation and strange virtues inhabit the lakes and rivers of the west. "Among these the sea-horse and master-otter are pre-eminent. By a singular anomaly the first is said to be found in certain inland loughs, and his appearance is imagined to be fatal to the unfortunate person who encounters him. The latter, however, should be an object of anxious research, for he is endued with amazing virtues. Where a portion of his skin is, the house cannot be burned, or the ship cast away, and steel or bullet will

not harm the man who possesses an inch of this precious material. Antony, indeed, confesses that in the course of his otter hunting he has never been fortunate enough to meet this valuable brute; but he tells a confused story of one having been killed far down in the north by three brothers called Montgomery, who from poverty became immensely rich, and whose descendants are opulent to this very day. He says the master-otter was seen twice in the neighbourhood. At Dhu-hill he appeared about sixty years ago, attended by about one hundred common-sized animals, who waited upon the master like loyal and dutiful beasts. He was also observed by one of the O'Donnel family while passing through Clew Bay in a sailing boat. Requiring a supply of fresh water, O'Donnel landed on an island for the purpose of filling his keg, but found the spring already occupied by a strange and nondescript animal. After his first surprise had subsided, he returned to the boat and procured a gun. This he loaded carefully with five fingers and a-half—for Antony is minute in all his narratives—and then, and within a dozen yards, levelled at the "master." Thrice he drew the trigger, and thrice the gun missed fire. The otter wisely determined not to give him a fourth chance, and left the well for the ocean. Mortified at his failure, O'Donnel tried his gun at a passing gull; it exploded without trouble, and finished the unfortunate bird—thus proving beyond a doubt that the gun was faultless, and the preservative qualities of the animal were alone to blame. 'And indeed,' quoth Antony, 'he might have snapped at the master to eternity; for if an inch of skin can save house, ship, and man, what a deal of virtue there must be in the whole hide?'"

Witches assume the appearance of hares, and, whilst thus transformed, are subject to the same conditions as individuals changed into wolves; indeed the connexion between witches and the lower animals, more especially cats, is very close.*

The Irish have always regarded cats as mysteriously connected with demoniacal influence. The house cat is excluded from a blessing; on entering a cottage the usual salutation being, "God save all here, barring the cat." It is considered very unlucky to take away the house-cat when changing residence;

* Mr. F. T. Elworthy, in his work on *The Evil Eye* (p. 29), states that "belief in the power of transformation seems in all countries to have been closely allied with witches, and with those possessed of the evil eye. The idea is very common in the stories of ancient mythology, and from the Middle Ages down to the present time it has possessed the popular mind. The hare, the wolf, the cat and the sow seem nowadays to be the favourite animals, whose shape is assumed, though many others are believed in."

consequently cats, especially in large towns, often suffer great privations, being entirely dependent on the sympathy of anyone who may chance to take compassion on them.

Cats should not unnecessarily be offended, as they are revengeful, treacherous, and cunning. If you are going on a journey, and a cat meet you on the road and look you full in the face, give up your journey, and turn back, for a witch is in your path. According to popular belief, cats understand everything that is said, and can assume various shapes at pleasure. They are special objects of mysterious dread, as many of them are believed to be men and women, metamorphosed into cats by demoniacal power. Cats have often great battles among themselves on account of hidden treasures, of which they are appointed guardians, when demons, in the shape of enormous cats, lead on the opposing forces on either side, and gather all the cats in the country to take part in the fight.

Numerous legends, relating to cats, have gathered around the carn of Heapstown, near Lough Arrow in the county Sligo, and may be taken as typical of those recounted by the peasantry elsewhere of this class of monument, for tumuli and carns are thought to be inhabited by enchanted cats "as large as a sheep," and having "a nail in the end of their tails." At night, lights are, at certain seasons of the year, seen to move round the carn, but woe betide the daring person who approaches it. In the morning, after this spectacle, smoke ascends, for some time, from the summit of the carn.* Long ago the entrance to the inner chamber of the carn, where great treasure lies hid, was guarded by an enchanted animal, an enormous cat as large as a tiger, which killed and devoured everyone daring enough to approach the place after nightfall. This monster has not been seen for a lengthened period, and there are no lately recorded instances of anybody in the neighbourhood having mysteriously disappeared. This gigantic creature has, however, left numerous, but degenerate, offspring; for not many years ago, a peasant who lived in the neighbourhood, accompanied by two dogs renowned for courage and daring, happened to pass the carn one night, when he was attacked by a vast number of cats, and compelled to run for his life. He succeeded in reaching his house, and closed and barred the door. All night long, however, he heard the cats around the place endeavouring to get in; and in the morning the mangled remains of the two faithful dogs were found strewn in front of the house.

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* Can this tale of smoke ascending from the carn be a faint reminiscence of the time when fires were, at certain seasons, regularly lighted on the summit? See *ante*, vol. i., p. 280, footnote.

The oldest reference to Irish cat-lore is probably that contained in a rare little book in black letter, already quoted, entitled *Beware the Cat*, the first edition of which appeared about the year 1560. The author, William Baldwin, relates that "upon a certain occasion there fell a controversy between Master Streamer and the writer, as to whether birds and beasts had reason, Master Streamer affirming that they had, and that as much as man, yea, and in some points, more"; and he thereupon told the story which is the subject-matter of the tract. He relates that about the year 1550, a "kern" of John Butler's, called Patrick Apore (probably Hore, an ancient Anglo-Norman Wexford family), made a raid, accompanied by one of his followers, on two lone houses, killed their inmates, and drove off all the four-footed beasts they possessed, which were but a cow and a sheep, and "got him to a church, thinking to lurk there till midnight was past, for there he was sure that no man would suspect or seek him." The rest of the story is better given in the words of the narrator, but the spelling has been modernized, and the contractions amplified.

"While this kern was in the church, he thought it best to dine, for he had eaten little that day, wherefore he made his boy (follower) go gather sticks and strake fire with his feres (steel),* and made a fire in the church and killed the sheep, and, after the Irish fashion, laid it thereupon, and roasted it. But when it was ready, and that he thought to eat it, there came in a cat, and set her by him, and said in Irish, *shane foel*, which is, "give me some meat." He, amazed at this, gave her the quarter that was in his hand, which, immediately, she did eat up, and asked for more, till she had consumed all the sheep, and, like a cormorant, not satisfied therewith, asked still for more. Wherefore, they supposed it was the devil, and, therefore, thinking it wisdom to please him, killed the cow which they had stolen, and when they had flayed it, gave the cat a quarter, which she immediately devoured. Then they gave her two other quarters, and in the meanwhile, after the country fashion, they did cut a piece of the hide, and pricked it upon four stakes which they set about the fire, and therein they set a piece of the cow for themselves, and with the rest of the hide they made each of them laps to wear about their feet, like brogues, both to keep their feet from hurt, all the next day, and also to save for meat the next night if they could get none other, by broiling them upon coals. By this time the cat had eaten three-quarters, and called for more, wherefore,

* Feres may mean his "companion." It is old English, and is employed in this sense by Spenser:—

"Hath won the laurel quite from all his feres."

they gave her that which was seething; and, doubting lest, when she had eaten that, she would eat them too, because they had no more for her, they got them out of the church, and the kern took his horse, and away he rode as fast as he could hie. When he was a mile or two from the church, the moon began to shine, and his boy (follower) espied the cat upon his master's horse behind him, and told him. Whereupon the kern took his dart, and, turning his face toward her, flang it, and stroke her through with it. But immediately there came to her such a sight of cats, that, after long fight with them, his boy (follower) was killed and eaten up, and he himself, as good and swift as his horse was, had much to do to escape. When he was come home, and had put off his harness (which was a corselet of mail made like a shirt, and his skull [iron helmet] covered with gilt leather and crested with otter skin), all weary and hungry, set him down by his wife, and told her his adventure. Which, when a kittling, his wife kept, scarce half a-year, had heard, up she started, and said, 'Hast thou killed Grimalkin?' and, therewith, she plunged in his face, and, with her teeth, took him by the throat, and ere that she could be taken away she had strangled him."*

In Shark Island a peasant, whose only boy was dying of fever, was warned by the ghostly apparition of the dead mother to "Batch a crowing hen, and kill her, and sprinkle the blood over the bed, and take ten straws and throw the tenth away and stir the blood with the rest; then lay them on the child, and he will sleep and do well." The father did as advised, and his child was quite recovered the next morning.

The sequel of the story is thus told by Lady Wilde.

"Now it happened that about three months after, a child of one of the neighbours grew sick, and was like to die. Then the man's wife rose up and said: 'See now, our child is like to die, but look how Dermot cured his son through the sprinkling of blood. Let us do the like.' So they caught a crowing hen and killed her, and sprinkled the blood over the sick child. But, lo,

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* A somewhat similar incident occurs in current tradition in South Lancashire. (*Notes and Queries*, 2nd Series, vol. x., p. 463), and is thus related by Mr. T. F. T. Dyer in *English Folk-Lore*, p. 110:—"A gentleman was one evening sitting cosily in his parlour reading or meditating, when he was interrupted by the appearance of a cat, which came down the chimney and called out—'Tell Dildrum Doldrum 's dead!' He was naturally startled by the occurrence, and when shortly afterwards his wife entered, he related to her what had happened, and her own cat, which accompanied her, exclaimed, 'Is Doldrum dead!' and immediately rushed up the chimney, and was heard of no more. Of course there were numberless conjectures upon such a remarkable occurrence, but the general opinion appears to be that Doldrum had been King of Catland, and that Dildrum was the next heir. A similar legend is current in Northumberland."

a terrible thing happened, for the door was flung open, and in walked two monstrous black cats. 'How dare you kill my kitten?'* said one of them—'my darling only kitten. But you shall suffer for it.' 'Ay,' said the other, 'we 'll teach you how to insult a royal cat again, and kill one of our great race, just to save your own wretched child,' and they flew at the man and tore his face and hands. Then the wife rushed at them with a churn-dash, while the man strove to defend himself with a spade. But all the same, the cats had the best of it, and clawed and tore and scratched, till the miserable pair could not see for the blood streaming down their faces.

"Luckily, however the neighbours, hearing the scrimmage, rushed in and helped to fight the cats, but soon they had to fly, for the cats were too strong for them, and not a soul could stand before them. However, at last the cats grew tired, and after licking their paws and washing their faces, they moved towards the door to go away, first saying to the man—'Now we have done enough to punish you for this time, and your baby will live, for death can take but one this night, and he has taken our child. So yours is safe, and this we swear by the blood and by the power of the great king of the cats.' So they whisked out of the house, and were never more seen by man or mortal on the island of Shark."

The traditional association of cats with old maids, and the belief that cats are connected with sorcery, or were the preferred companions of witches, are probably quite as much founded on fact, as is the old legend that cats were specially created by the Almighty to keep down the mice which swarmed in Noah's Ark, and threatened to consume the food allocated to the support of the passengers, human and animal.

Mr. T. F. T. Dyer, in *English Folk-Lore*, states that—"In Ireland it is considered unfortunate to meet a barking dog early in the morning, and, on the other hand, just as fortunate for one to enter a house the first thing in the day. Dogs are not without their weather-lore. Thus, when they eat grass, it is a sign of rain; if they roll on the ground and scratch, or become drowsy and stupid, a change in the weather may be expected. As in the case of the cat, most of their turnings and twistings, are supposed to be prognostications of something."

A multitude of places, throughout Ireland, are named after cattle. Legends upon the subject of "cow lore" are current amongst the peasantry; and stories relating to bulls, cows, and calves are interwoven with Irish Fairy-mythology, and interest chiefly from their topographical references. Several of the early

* Evidently a case of unexplained metamorphosis.

Irish Saints—like the Druids—were credited with the possession of magical cows. Cattle raids and forays afford fruitful themes for early romances, the most celebrated production being the *Táin bó Cuailgne*, or the cattle raid of Louth, the so called *Nibelungen Lied* of Irish History. It has been remarked that even the celebrebrated abduction of Dervorgil partakes, when examined by the light of modern investigation, more of the nature of a cattle foray than a romance, or love passage, between an Irish Princess aged 44 and a King in his 62nd year.

According to tradition the Druids held the bovine species in veneration. One of the traditional roads of ancient Erin runs not far from the village of Ballyvodock, near Cork; it is called "the road of the white cow," a mystical animal that appears to have risen from the sea, walked one day through Ballyvodock on to Foaty Island, and drank at Lough-na-bo. The road runs over the hill to Glanmire, near Cork, and, according to tradition, off to the County Limerick. In popular folk-lore the origin of this, and other somewhat similarly named magical roads is described as follows:—

Long ages ago as some fishermen were strolling along the strand at Ballycronen, in the Barony of Imokilly, they observed a mermaid asleep on the water's edge. She was captured and carried to a farmer's house in the immediate vicinity, where she lived imparting instruction and foretelling future events. On the May Eve next succeeding her capture she gave directions that she should be carried back to the strand, and a great concourse of people assembled to witness her departure. She told them to assemble again on the same spot on the following May Eve, as three magical cows would emerge from the ocean, she then plunged into the billows, and was never seen again. On that day twelve months all the inhabitants of Ireland gathered on the cliffs, and about an hour after midday three enchanted cows suddenly emerged from the sea at Imokilly. The first was white; the second red, and the third black. They kept in company for about a mile; then the white cow went north-west towards the county Limerick, the red cow went westward, and passed around the coast of Ireland, the black cow going north-east towards the county Waterford. These roads are still pointed out in many places, and are known as "The White," "The Red," and "The Black Cow's Road."

One celebrated cow, called Glasgavlen, is remembered in tradition all over Ireland; and there is throughout the kingdom hardly a county which does not possess a lake, or well, in which lives an enchanted cow which, at certain times, appears above the waters. According to tradition, Glasgavlen presented herself before every house in Ireland, giving to each a plentiful supply

of milk. This continued for a lengthened period until an avaricious woman laid by a quantity for sale, whereupon the offended animal at once left Ireland, plunging into the sea off the hill of Howth, on her way to Scotland. A similar legend in the South of Ireland describes her as going to Wales. Another legend narrates that the cow was deceived by a greedy old woman, who milked her into a sieve, instead of into a milk pail, in consequence of which she left Ireland for ever.* It has been observed that avarice on the one hand, and imprudence on the other, are two failings frequently held up for reprobation in Irish folk-lore, whilst a blind reliance on supernatural powers, for daily sustenance, is strongly inculcated.

In the county Limerick, on the banks of the river Dee, a legend is current of a cow which frequently emerged from the stream and grazed on the banks. A farmer who observed this intercepted her retreat to the water and drove her into his byre. Were she milked a hundred times a-day she would each time fill a can; but after some time the woman who milked her died, and the farmer put another, who was red haired, in her place. At her first milking the cow was restless, kicked out, and spilled the milk. "Bad luck to ye for the same," said the red-haired female, whereupon the cow at once made off for the river, plunged in, and was never more seen.

The following legend, recounted by Mr. W. F. Wakeman, seems to point to the former sacred character of the cow:—"Many years ago a native of Inishmurry, with envy and hatred in his

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* In *Hero-Tales of Ireland*, Jeremiah Curtin remarks (pages xliv-xlv), that—"In a short tale of Glas Gavlen, which I obtained near Carrick, county Donegal, it is stated that the cow came down from the sky. According to the tale, she gives milk in unlimited quantities to all people without exception. Time after time, the rich or powerful try to keep her for their own use exclusively, but she escapes. Appearing first at Dun Kinealy, she goes finally to Glen Columkil near the ocean, where a strong man tries to confine her; but she rises in the air, and, clearing the high ridge on the northern side of the glen disappears. Since then, there is no free milk in Erin, and none but that which common cows give. . . . (Pages 549-500.) *Glas Gainach.*—In this name of the celebrated cow, *glas* means 'gray'; *gainach* is a corruption of *gaunach*, written *gamhnach*, which means a cow whose calf is a year old, that is, a cow without a calf that year, a farrow calf. *Gamhnach* is an adjective from *gamhan*, a yearling calf.

"In Donegal, *gavlen* is used instead of *gaunach*; and the best story-teller informed me that *gavlen* means a cow that has not had a calf for five years. He gave the terms for cows that have not had calves for one, two, three, four, and five years. These terms I wrote down; but unfortunately they are not accessible at present. The first in the series is *gaunach*, the last *gavlen*. The intervening ones I cannot recall. . . . (Page 554.) *Balor* and *Glas Gavlen.*—This was a great tale in the old time; but it is badly broken up now. If we could discover who Balor and his daughter were really, we might, perhaps, be able to understand why his grandson was fated to kill him. The theft of Glas Gavlen is the first act in a series which ends with the death of Balor."

heart, stole out one night and feloniously slew by stabbing the cow, which was the chief support of a neighbouring family. The blood of the milk-giver, thus cruelly slaughtered, flowed, it is said, in every direction, and, upon congealing, instantly quickened and became transformed into mice. These animals ultimately proved a nuisance on the island."

Another legend recounts how a poor herdsman, in charge of his master's cattle, observed, one bright sunny day, high up in the heavens, a small black cloud, which descended rapidly, and he heard a voice saying, "This is the Tarv Connaire; he will descend on one of the cows; whoever drinks the first milk of that cow will have the gift of prophecy." The herdsman followed the advice of the aerial voice, and being thus endowed with the gift of superhuman knowledge, left his lowly employment; his fame ultimately spread all over Ireland, and lingers even yet wherever the Irish language is spoken. This tale and that of the *Táin Bó Cualnge*, vividly elucidates the great estimation in which cattle were held in Ireland in olden times. The plot of this story is roughly as follows:—The King and Queen of Connaught indulged in rival exhibitions of wealth, the Queen enjoyed separate property, which consisted, amongst other things, of a large herd of cows. Against this the King showed a herd of equal value, and in addition a beautiful young bull, which could not be matched by his consort. The Queen thereupon despatched a trusty messenger to seek a bull of equal excellence, which at length was found in the possession of the King of Ulster, who, after some discussion, promised to send it to Queen Maeve. Unfortunately the messenger, exulting in the success of his negotiations, and excited by drink, boasted that if the bull had not been yielded peaceably it would have been taken by force; this speech being repeated to the King of Ulster he recalled his promise. The Queen of Connaught then invaded the northern Province, and its great hero Cuchullin (Coolin) defended it; but the coveted bull was at length carried off.

The similarity of the legendary lore of the East and West is, as before stated, very striking. The Ramayana contains a long narrative of a person, seeking to obtain possession of a wonderful cow, sending messengers with various offers and presents, in order to procure even a loan of the coveted animal, and with final instructions that, if these overtures were rejected, recourse was to be had to force. Negotiations, at first apparently successful, are ultimately broken off, and an endless number of battles and single combats ensue. The plot of the story tallies with the Irish legend, except that the animal contended for is a cow and not a supernatural bull.

In a play that, not long ago, was usually acted at wakes all

the men were turned out of the room, as a preliminary proceeding, and a young girl was dressed out with a cowhide thrown over her, and horns placed on her head, whilst girls formed a circle and danced round her. A loud knocking is heard at the door. "Who wants to enter?" asks the master of ceremonies. A voice without replies:—"The guards demand admittance for the bull." Entrance is refused, the knocking continues, the door is burst open, and the bull, a young man with horns on his head, dressed in a cowhide, enters, followed by a band of young men. The cow and her attendants affect great alarm; the bull endeavours to seize the cow, who is defended by her maidens; a mock fight takes place between the intruders and the maidens; and the scene terminates in uproarious mirth and the capture of the cow.

It is almost impossible to account for the legends about cows or bulls emerging from the sea, from lakes, rivers, or springs, and wandering through the whole of Ireland, giving names to lakes, islands, roads, and meadows (Clontarf, near Dublin, for instance), or to the wonderful attributes ascribed to certain bulls of early pre-Christian or early Christian tradition, without supposing that the people who recounted the stories derived these strange fancies from an oriental source, for classic mythology is filled with, and many Greek localities receive their names from, the wanderings of Io, the beloved of Jupiter, who, on account of Juno's jealousy, was metamorphosed into a white cow.

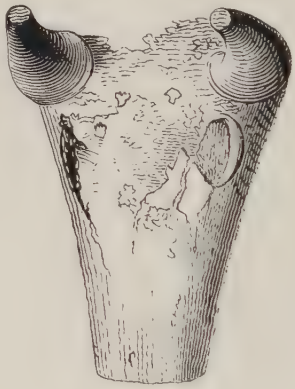

FIG. 38.

Representation of Bovine Head in Bronze, in the collection of the R.I.A. Half real size. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

Before leaving the subject of cow-lore, it may be well to draw attention to a representation in bronze of a bovine head, to be seen in the collection of the Royal Irish Academy. The art characteristic of this ornament (fig. 38) appears to be late Celtic. The metal composing it is of fine quality and of a golden colour. It was formed by a process of casting; great care seems to have been taken to spare and to economize the material. Only one eye-socket remains; it is shallow but still sufficiently deep to have held an eye, composed probably of glass, vitrified paste, or enamel of some kind. The head is open at the back, and that it had been attached to some object is sufficiently clear from the

fact that the sides are pierced with a row of small apertures that held pins, by which the neck was secured. It is extremely probable that this antique belongs to a class of typical ecclesiastical ornamentation, and attention is directed to the case of St. Molaise's Gospel, R. I. A., on which this device appears, apparently as one of the four evangelical symbols.

Hercules slew the Erymanthean boar. In old Irish legends we find Finn slaying all over the kingdom boars endowed with supernatural powers. The black pig or boar is a legendary animal whose deeds and death form a fruitful subject for the shannachies, or tellers of stories, of almost every county in Ireland. In oral legends we find the heroes of antiquity slaying magical boars in various parts of the kingdom. There are strong indications, in tradition and folk-lore, that, in ancient times, the boar was held in great dread, or perhaps in great estimation. One writer even goes so far as to say that the prominence given to the animal, in topographical nomenclature and legendary tales, suggests the idea that the boar may be identified with that system of animal worship which, we have reason to believe, once existed in this country. Kemble states that, among the Germans and Anglo-Saxons, swine were sacred animals. A track styled "the road of the Black Pig" commences near Athlone, passes through the county Roscommon, and can be traced as far as the Curlew mountains in the county Sligo. It is said that there are many other "roads of the Black Pig" throughout Ireland.

We are told that when the Firbolgs ruled the kingdom the land was overrun with swine, which committed great depredations: indeed so great were their numbers that Ireland was styled Muck Inis, or the Island of the Pigs; but, on the conquest of the country by the Dedanann, they extirpated all these animals with the exception of one herd, which continued to devastate the maritime districts of the county Clare by day and retired at night to an island. To banish the herd from this, their last retreat, was found to be beyond the human power of the Dedanann, who had therefore recourse to magic, and raised a violent convulsion of the elements which swept the entire herd into the sea.

In the county Sligo, in the immediate neighbourhood of Scurmore, there is a tumulus styled "The grave of the Black Pig." The legend regarding the origin of the name is as follows:—Many years ago there was, in the north of Ireland, an enormous magical boar which committed great devastation throughout the country; so much so, that all the hunters of the kingdom assembled, determined to pursue the animal until they succeeded in killing it. The chase was well sustained, and

the boar, finding the province of Ulster uncomfortable quarters, made off, but was overtaken in the Valley of the Black Pig, a little vale situated in the townland of Mucduff, in the county Sligo. Here the boar turned at bay, and was slain on the spot where he was subsequently buried; his pursuers stood around leaning on their spears, viewing with amazement the huge proportions of the body, as also the length and strength of the bristles with which it was covered. One of the hunters incautiously stroked them the wrong way, thereby causing a venomous bristle to prick his hand, and fell down writhing in agony, beseeching his companions to bring him water from a neighbouring well, which would not alone assuage his unbearable thirst, but would also effectually cure him. None succeeded in conveying the liquid to him; for by some magical property attached to the spring no human being could carry water away from it. It is quite evident that this tale is merely a slightly modified version of the death of Dermod, as recounted in the legend of "The Pursuit of Dermod and Grania" by Finn Mac Cool, whose hunt of the magical boar in the county Sligo is related yet amongst the country people, and is as follows:—

Finn, like many a modern gallant, paid attention to several of the fairest belles of his day without committing himself to any one in particular. Each lady imagined that she was the chosen bride of the great chief; each, of course, cordially detested her rivals: the result was an all-round quarrel, carried on with such acrimony as threatened to throw the entire kingdom into a hopeless embroilment. Finn perceived that with him alone rested the power of ending this; but, as he wished to marry only one of the ladies, he found himself placed in an unpleasant predicament, to extricate himself from which some stratagem must be devised. He accordingly made a declaration of equal affection and admiration for all the numerous ladies; but announced that, as he was not rich enough to marry them all, he would leave the decision of the question to the agility of their pretty feet. Finn himself stood at the summit of the hill chosen for the memorable race to receive the successful competitor. Amongst the bevy of beauties there was one whose charms had made an impression upon Finn's heart, and to her he whispered advice, by adopting which she might be certain to win. This lady was Grania, the daughter of Cormac, Monarch of Ireland; and the counsel which Finn gave her was simply not to attempt to run too fast in the outset lest she should exhaust herself. Grania appeared to be left far behind by all the other runners, who at once put forth their utmost strength to breast the declivity. Soon, however, they lost breath, and finally sank down, one after another, completely exhausted, and had then the mortifica-

tion to see the princess pass by them. Several made a last despairing effort, but in vain; for she alone reached the summit. The princess had now gained as firm possession of the chieftain's hand, as formerly she had of his heart, and a long life of happiness might have been anticipated for the distinguished pair, but the lady proved as frail and false as Finn was chivalrous and confiding. The wedding dinner was prepared by Dermod O'Deena, one of Finn's celebrated warriors, as well as one of the best cooks of the Feni. On the neck of Dermod was a mole, which possessed the magical power of causing any woman who gazed on it to fall desperately in love with Dermod, who on this occasion, heated by his culinary work, loosened his throat-fastening, thus exposing to view the magic spot. Grania, who chanced to see it, fell so desperately in love that she eloped with Dermod. In vain Finn pursued them through mountains and fastnesses. During a period of twelve months they eluded pursuit by sleeping in a different place each night, under the rude stone monuments called "Dermod and Grania's Beds," erected by Dermod after each day's journey.

At length Finn decided to inaugurate a boar-hunt; this plan he considered must be successful, as Dermod could not refrain from joining a hunt whenever he heard the music of the hounds. Finn obtained a wild boar, renowned for ferocity, which he placed in a pit, and put over him a large flagstone, giving orders that the boar should be kept thus confined until his rage, excited by the pangs of hunger, should enable him to burst through the impediment to his freedom. Finn stationed hounds in various places, at Killala, Jamestown, and all along the Shannon, so as to prevent the escape of the boar. Rendered frantic by hunger, the imprisoned animal managed to lift the confining flag. Finn pursued, with hound and horn, as far as Belagrania, near Collooney, where Dermod was then concealed. The latter, hearing the baying of hounds, joined the hunt, despite the entreaties of Grania that he should remain. As Dermod emerged from his hiding-place the boar ran between his legs, carrying him away astride on his back. At last Dermod, who had not the advantage of being bound, Mazeppa-like, to his steed, giddy with the pace and exhausted by his exertion of holding on, relaxed his grasp, tumbled off, and was severely injured. The fall occurred at Tobernabostul, near Benbulbin, where he was found by Finn, who was so moved at his lamentable plight that instead of then wreaking vengeance on his rival he asked if he could afford him relief. Dermod thereupon entreated Finn to go to a place indicated by him, there to pull up a bunch of rushes, when a spring would at once arise, three drinks of which would cure him. During Finn's absence on this errand the boar returned and

attacked Dermod, who, though greatly disabled, managed by superhuman exertions to grasp the fore and hind legs of the boar, and to pull him to pieces, just as the dying animal had succeeded in ripping him up. On returning with the magic drink, Finn was agreeably surprised to find his enemy in his death agonies, and, in his first surprise, allowed the water, which he was carrying in the palm of his hand, to pour through his fingers. On the spot where it fell the Well of Tobernabostul sprang up. Finn was not as generous to his enemy in death as in life; for he cut off his head, and brought it back to Belagrania as a present to his runaway bride. When the beautiful but hapless Grania rushed from her hiding-place to meet her husband, she saw but his freshly-severed head, and, in a paroxysm of despair, she fell dead, and all the hunters of the country wept tears of sorrow for the brave and the fair. Grania's corpse was carried to repose with that of her husband on the mountain slope, in the townland of Gleniff, in the parish of Rossinver, in a cavern in the face of a cliff, still called "Dermod and Grania's Bed."*

There are other versions of the tale, as recounted amongst the country people, which differ slightly from the above. One of them states that when Finn found the runaway couple he affected to forgive them, on condition that Dermod promised never to hunt within the bounds of his territory; but, aware of Dermod's unconquerable love of sport, Finn caused the boar-hunters to pass near Dermod's dwelling, certain that he would join in the chase, and thus afford him an excuse for taking his life.

Another variant narrates that a cruel act of Dermod's was supposed to have produced his death. His infant son, by Grania, was at nurse with a swineherd in a lake-dwelling on the lake of Templevanny. Dermod went to see it; but, on perceiving that the swineherd's child was finer than his own, dashed out its brains. The swineherd seized a sucking-pig—showing that even at that early date pigs shared the house with human occupants—and killed it, praying that the slayer of his child might meet the fate of the pig; and on the following day Dermod was killed by the boar.

There is a close resemblance between the Irish legend and the story of the magical boar of extraordinary size and ferocity which, according to Herodotus (*Clio*, 34, 35), appeared near Olympus, and did immense injury to the Mysians. Vainly they attempted to kill it, and finally despatched a letter to Crœsus, imploring him to send his son with chosen hunters and dogs to destroy it. The king, warned in a dream of danger threatening

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* See *ante*, vol. i., pp. 50, 51.

his son, at first refused, but afterwards relented, and permitted him to go in pursuit of the magical boar, when his son was accidentally slain by one of own companions.

The tale of "The Pursuit of Dermod and Grania" has been translated by Dr. P. W. Joyce from the Irish MSS., and published in *Old Celtic Romances.* The foregoing narratives are mostly taken from letters, written at the period of the Ordnance Survey, in which are embodied many oral traditions of the peasantry as then recounted by them.

There is a very curious story in various Irish MSS., styled *The History of Mac Datho's Hog.* Mac Datho, king of Leinster in the first century of the Christian era, invited the kings of Connaught and of Ulster to a feast, where he caused to be served up an enormous hog, the division of which, and the assigning to each chieftain his proper share, became a matter of fierce contention between the guests, as was intended by their crafty entertainer; for the partition of the carcase of the animal had the same effect in Ireland, as had the presentation of the apple in classic mythology.

In various late Irish MSS. it is narrated that in many parts of Ireland, up to the establishment of Christianity, there were public establishments styled "Brudins": the destruction of the most celebrated, that of the Brudin Da Derga, forms the subject of a curious tale. These institutions were large farm-houses, open to all comers. Each of them possessed a magical caldron, never taken off the fire, which yielded a proper share to every guest, and no matter what quantity of food was put into it to be cooked, there could be taken out only what was sufficient for the company.

It seems strange that the introduction of Christianity should have been the means of abolishing these institutions, for if they were mere houses, providing free entertainment for man and beast, should we not, on the contrary, have expected to see them increase in number and in hospitality with the introduction of the new order of things, and the inauguration of the law of love? Any person who studies the supernatural episodes attending the destruction of Brudin Da Derga will undoubtedly arrive at the conclusion that this establishment, at any rate, was a pagan religious institution. A hidden observer saw a person going through an incantation, in which he failed. From this failure the unsuccessful performer knew that some unauthorized individual must be looking on, and he accordingly ordered another mythical personage, who appears to have been a swine-herd, to slay his pig, and divine who was looking into the Brudin. This incident is valuable as denoting the animal, or, at any rate, one of the animals, from which divination was made; and it is even more instructive in another respect, inasmuch as, on the

Continent, the pig was sacrificed to Mars Sylvanus, the primitive God of battle.

In the old pamphlet, already mentioned, entitled *Beware the Cat*, there is a curious reference to swine. It is as follows (spelling modernized) :—"I cannot tell by what means witches do change their own likeness and the shapes of other things. But I have heard of so many and seen so much myself, that I am sure they do it, for in Ireland (as they have been in England) witches are, for fear, held in high reverence, and they be so cunning that they can change the shapes of things as they list at their pleasure, and so deceive the people thereby, that an Act was made in Ireland that no man should buy any red swine. The cause whereof was this. Witches used to send to the markets many red swine, fair and fat, to see unto, as any might be, and would in that form continue long, but it chanced the buyers of them to bring them to any water. Immediately they found them returned either into wisps of hay, straw, old rotten boards, or some other such like trumpery, by means whereof they have lost their money, or such other cattle as they gave in exchange."*

There does not appear to be any Act in the Irish Statute Book prohibiting the sale of red swine, to which our "Irish Munchausen" alludes; but an enactment (2 Elizabeth, chap. 4) for the preservation of salmon and eel made the feeding or pasturage of swine upon any strand or the banks of any river, during certain periods of the year, an offence punishable by statute. A general Act against witchcraft and sorcery was passed at a somewhat late period (28 Elizabeth, chap. 2), but without particulars as to charms or enchantments.

Swine have bequeathed their name to innumerable places; the prefix *muck*, *i.e.* pig, is attached to upwards of eighty townland names throughout Ireland.

In the late Celtic period the figure of the boar was used as decoration, and it is stated to have been a well-recognised Celtic symbol on the coins of every part of Gaul, as well as on those struck by the cognate races of Britain, Spain, Styria, and Galatia.†

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* Mr. F. T. Elworthy quotes *Higden*, by Trevisa, his translator, that in Ireland "olde wyfes and wymmen . . . by crafts of nygromancie maketh fat swyne, . . . and selleth hem in chepinge and in feires; but anon these swyne passeth water they torneth agen in to her own kynde. . . . But these swyne mowe not be i-kept by no manere craft for to dure in likneses of swyn over thre days."—*Higden, Polychron. Rolls Series*, i. 360.

To see pigs running about with straws in their mouths foretells an approaching storm.

† Mr. F. T. Elworthy, in *The Evil Eye*, pp. 333, 334, states that, in ancient Egypt, both the pig and wild boar were held in abhorrence as unclean animals unfit for food. "It was unlawful, says Herodotus, to sacrifice the pig to any gods but to the moon and Bacchus, and then only at the full moon. Except on this

Representations in bronze have been occasionally found in Ireland, but they belong to a very late period; two in the collection of the Royal Irish Academy are here given (figs. 39, 40).

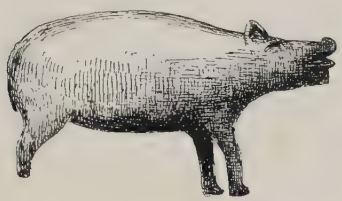

FIG. 39.

Representation of a Boar in Bronze, in the collection of the R. I. A. Half real size.

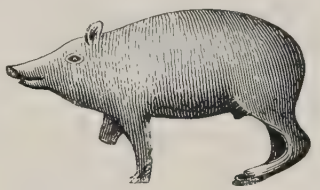

FIG. 40.

Representation of a Boar in Bronze, in the collection of the R. I. A. Half real size.

Camden depicts the Irish of his time as in the habit of looking through the blade-bone of a sheep to try and discover a dark spot, foretelling a death. Drayton, in his *Polyolbion*, describes this practice as "reading the speal bone."

> "A divination strange the Dutch-made English have
> Appropriate to that place (as though some power it gave),
> By th' shoulder of a ram from off the right side par'd,
> Which usually they boil, the spade-bone being bar'd,
> Which when the wizard takes, and gazing thereupon,
> Things long to come foreshowes, as things don long agone."

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occasion the people were forbidden to eat its flesh. Even then they did not eat the pig, which was sacrificed before their door, but gave it back to the person from whom it was purchased. Plutarch considered the pig to be connected with the worship of Osiris, and it also appears in the legend of Horus. There were 'many small porcelain figures of sows . . . found, of a later period,' and probably we may with reason consider them as amulets. The boar is represented in a tomb at Thebes, and he was 'an emblem of Evil.' In the judgment scenes, when on weighing the soul it is found wanting, it is condemned by Osiris 'to return to earth under the form of a pig, or some other unclean animal.'

"In Greek mythology the pig, as an amulet, becomes clearer, and helps us further in the explanation of another important modern charm of which we have yet to speak.

"The pig was sacred to Demeter, and, of course, also to her 'daughter and double,' Proserpine, whom we have proved to be *unam eandemque*. It came at length to be 'an embodiment of the corn-goddess herself'; and at the Thesmophoria, a festival confined to women, representing the descent of Proserpine into the lower world, it was customary for the women to eat swine's flesh, to throw pigs, cakes of dough, and pine-branches into the Megara, or chasms of Demeter and Proserpine. . . . The Greeks could not decide whether the Jews worshipped swine or abominated them, 'for they might neither eat nor kill them,' so that if eating was forbidden on account of uncleanness, the unlawfulness of killing them tells still more strongly for their sanctity. Frazer believes that swine were rather sacred than unclean to the Jews, and that, in general, so-called unclean animals were originally sacred, and that they were not eaten because they were divine."

The practice of "divining by the blade bone" is not extinct. It still lingers, it is alleged, in remote parts; and there is but little doubt that if careful search be made, it may yet be found, particularly amongst the Irish-speaking portion of the population. Proofs that it did exist are numerous, and that it was practised in the same manner in Ireland, as it is at present in Greece, as well as amongst the Bedouins, and in most parts of Asia, as far as the island of Ceylon. The bone used for divining had to be the right shoulder-blade of a ram. Auguries were drawn from it by removing the flesh and looking through the semi-transparent bone. Another process of divining was to broil the bone, and divine by the cracks caused by the heat of the fire. The heat occasions the bone to crack in various directions; these cracks generally vary greatly, but there are certain usually-occurring and principal lines of cleavage, and from these the result of the augury was drawn. Another method was to reduce the bone to a powder, then dissolve it in water, and swallow the mixture.

One of the means adopted to obtain magical prescience of future events was of a strange character. The postulant, wrapped in the freshly removed skin of a ram, goat, or bull, slept near a stream, or waterfall, and in his slumber information regarding the future was revealed to him. Another receipt is preserved in Cormac's Glossary. It would not do to thus leave open the door of the temple of magic to the general reader, could it be for a moment supposed he would make use of the following rites:—"Through this the poet discovers whatever he desires to reveal. He chews a piece of the flesh of a red pig, or of a dog, or cat, and he brings it afterwards on a flag behind the door, and chants an incantation on it, and offers it to idol gods; and his idol gods are brought to him, but he finds them not on the morrow. And he pronounces incantations on his two palms, and his idol gods are also brought to him, in order that his sleep may not be interrupted; and he lays his two palms on his two cheeks, and thus falls asleep, and he is watched in order that no one may interrupt or disturb him, until everything about which he is engaged is revealed to him. . . . St. Patrick abolished this, and declared that whoever should practise it would neither enjoy heaven nor earth, because it was renouncing baptism."

It must not be imagined that belief in dreams, as a portent of future events, as a message from the spirit world, or as a revelation from on High, is, or ever has been, confined to the illiterate and superstitious. On the contrary, some of the most eminent men of all ages have clung firmly to the belief in their supernatural character. A prominent feature in the *Confessio* of St. Patrick is his firm belief in certain dreams which he

considered to be direct revelations from the Almighty, and it is to be observed that, as described by him, there appears to have been nothing in them to distinguish them from ordinary dreams. What could be more natural than that, languishing for years in slavery, he should have his waking thoughts occupied about flight, and that he should subsequently dream of his escape. It was not then observed that many dreams arise from an overheated imagination, a too full stomach, or are influenced by acts and occurrences of past life, but now analysis of deductions from dream-incidents, known as Oneirology or Oneiromancy, practised in all ages and in all classes, dethroned from its position as a science is relegated to the custody of charlatans, although we might seem to possess the warranty of Holy Scripture for its orthodoxy as well as for its genuineness, at least under certain circumstances.

The ancient Greeks imagined that a certain class of dreams were a revealment of the future, and that their fulfilment could not be averted but by expiating ceremonies. One method of frustrating the effects of a menacing vision was to relate its purport to the Sun, who was credited with the power of safeguarding the postulant from evils threatened by the night.

James Sully, in his work on *Illusions*, remarks that—

"The earliest theories respecting dreams illustrate very clearly the perception of the remoteness of dream-life from waking experience. By the simple mind of primitive man, this dream-world is regarded as similar in its nature or structure to our common world, only lying remote from this. The savage conceives that when he falls asleep his second self leaves his familiar body and journeys forth to unfamiliar regions, where it meets the departed second selves of his dead ancestors, and so on. From this point of view, the experience of the night, though equal in reality to that of day, is passed in a wholly disconnected region.

"A second and more thoughtful view of dreams, marking a higher grade of intellectual culture, is that these visions of the night are symbolic pictures unfolded to the inner eye of the soul by some supernatural being. The dream experience is now, in a sense, less real than it was before, since the phantasms that wear the guise of objective realities are simply images spread out to the spirit's gaze, or the direct utterance of a divine message. Still, this mysterious contact of the mind with the supernatural is regarded as a fact, and so the dream assumes the appearance of a higher order of experience. Its one point of attachment to the experience of waking life lies in its symbolic function; for the common form which this supernatural view assumes is that the dream is a dim prevision of coming events. Artemidorus, the great authority on dream interpretation (oneirocritics) for the

ancient world, actually defines a dream as 'a motion or friction of the soul in a diverse form, signifying either good or evil to come'; and even a logician like Porphyry ascribes dreams to the influence of a good demon, who thereby warns us of the evils which another and bad demon is preparing for us. The same mode of viewing dreams is quite common to-day, and many who pride themselves on a certain intellectual culture, and who imagine themselves to be free from the weakness of superstition, are apt to talk of dreams as of something mysterious, if not distinctly ominous. Nor is it surprising that phenomena which at first sight look so wild and lawless, should still pass for miraculous interruptions of the natural order of events."

The peasantry were formerly very particular in their observance of omens. If a countryman, about to start from home on a journey, or about to undertake a particular work, observes a bad omen, he abandons the journey, or relinquishes the work, at least for the time; or he abandons it altogether, in many instances, if the omen be very inauspicious; but if from sheer necessity he must proceed, it is with the full impression that his doing so will result in failure.

To meet a flat-footed or a red-haired man the first thing in the morning is unlucky; red-haired people are, in many districts, almost savagely disliked, are treated as foreigners, and should never be trusted. Red-haired men are bad enough, but to meet a red-haired woman, as you start on important business, is such a terrible omen, that the man who will not at once turn back must have "nerve enough to face the devil." Though considered very unlucky, in actual everyday life, yet, on the other hand, the red-haired man, or the red-haired woman, generally, in the fairy world, enacts the role of a benevolent personage, and rescues, or points out the means whereby the unhappy mortal, who finds himself helpless under fairy spells, can extricate himself from their power.

Peeling an apple in a long, thin, narrow strip from core-end to core-end, swinging the peel three times round the head and then throwing it over the left shoulder—married or single life being foretold by the peel remaining entire or breaking—and finding in the coils of the peel so cast, when on the ground, the initial or initials of their coming sweetheart is a semi-superstitious, semi-humorous custom common all over Ireland.

A singular survival of augury by birds is still practised by children on the "merry-thought" or wishing-bone of a chicken. This, when pulled asunder, denotes good luck to the one in whose

possession the larger portion of the bone remains; again, when the "merry thought" is drawn as a lot it gives a wish to the fortunate drawer of the lucky portion. The belief in the peculiar luckiness of this bone is evidently derived from the ancient use of the cock in divination. We know that the cock was the usual sacrifice offered to unfriendly spirits and to the fairies. Burying a live cock is described as a remedy for insanity, and even in late years this cure has been resorted to for epilepsy, and witches were accused of sacrificing cocks.

Amongst other means used by the Druids to foretell future events was observation of the movements of birds. Many auguries are drawn from the appearance or flight of birds on New Year's morning. A rook perched on the housetop portends a death in the household; if perched on the cattle byre some of the inmates are certain to be afflicted with disease during the oncoming year. The peculiar whistle of the starling is regarded with especial trepidation by the peasantry as they are supposed to be communicating with the fairies. To hear a blackbird sing, or to see a robin approach the doorstep, betokens a severe spring. Whoever kills a robin will never prosper, for "the robin (in Irish, the *spiddóge*) is, as is well known, a blessed bird, and no one, no matter how wild or cruel, would kill or hurt one, partly from love, partly from fear. They believe, if they killed a robin, a large lump would grow on the palm of their right hand, preventing them from working or from hurling."

Many curious anecdotes are on record concerning the appearance of the robin, which is sometimes thought to augur approaching death. In the account of the death of Dr. Doyle, as given in the *Life, Times, and Correspondence of Bishop Doyle*, Vol. II., p. 496, Mr. Fitz-Patrick says:—"Considering that the season was mid-summer, and not winter, the visit of two robin redbreasts in the sick room may be noticed as interesting. They remained fluttering round, and sometimes perching on the uncurtained bed. The priests, struck by the novelty of the circumstance, made no effort to expel the little visitors; and the robins hung lovingly over the Bishop's head until death released him."

Should the robin enter a house in autumn it is said to prognosticate approaching hard weather, frost, and snow.

A good omen is to see a crane, as, whenever this country was scourged by war, these birds always mysteriously disappeared.

The cuckoo, the "harbinger of spring," as it is poetically designated, is a wandering voice and a wandering mystery; for while you pause, in a futile attempt to locate the sound, it has boxed the compass. It is doubtless this ventriloquistic characteristic which has made it the subject of strange fancies and of

wild fables. The cuckoo is associated with ideas of divination, for the first time, in spring, that the listener hears it, towards whatever quarter he is then looking, in that quarter he will live during the next year; and if he has money in his pocket he will never be without it during the year.

There is a rhyme current alike in Ireland and Great Britain, respecting the cuckoo:—

> "If a cuckoo sits on a bare thorn,
> You may sell your cow and buy corn;
> But if she sits on a green bough,
> You may sell your corn and buy a cow."

Classic antiquity shows parallel instances, for as Churchill says:—

> "Among the Romans not a bird
> Without a prophecy was heard;
> Fortunes of empires often hung
> On the magician magpie's tongue;
> And every crow was, to the State,
> A sure interpreter of fate."

The New Year was sometimes poetically reckoned from the birth of summer, the 1st of May, for an ancient Irish rhyming augury says:—

> "A white lamb on my right hand,
> So will good come to me;
> But not the little false cuckoo,
> On the first day of the year."

Toland, in his *History of the Druids*, recounts the following anecdote to illustrate the manner in which omens regarding the raven were looked on in his time:—"When I was in Dublin, in the year 1697, I walked out one day to the village of Finglass, and overtook upon the way two gentlemen of the old Irish stock, with whom I had contracted some acquaintance at the coffee-house. They told me they were going a good way further, about a business of some importance; and not many minutes after one of 'em cry'd out with joy to the other: 'See, cousin, by heaven, matters will go well,' pointing at the same instant to a raven feeding and hopping hard by, which had a white feather or two in the wing that was towards us. The other appear'd no less transported, nor would they stir till they saw what way the raven flew, which being to the south of them, and with a great noise, they were fully confirm'd about the success of their business. . . . Upon my putting some questions to those gentlemen, they said it was certain, by observation of all ages, that a raven having any white in its wings, and flying on the right hand of any person, croaking at the same time, was an infallible presage of good-luck."

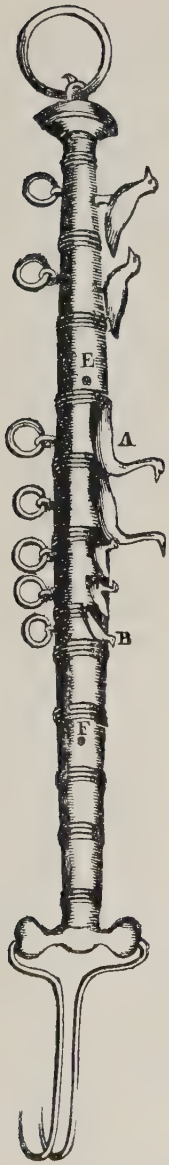

Fig. 41.
Bronze Instrument, with bird ornaments. One-fourth real size. Reproduced from the *Dublin Penny Journal.*

Spenser calls it—

> "The ill-fac'd owle, death's dreadful messenger;
> The hoarse night raven, trompe of doleful dreere."

Shakspeare, in *Othello*, describes its harsh croak, when illness of any kind is visiting a house, as an inauspicious sound:—

> "O, it comes o'er my memory
> As doth the raven o'er the infected house,
> Boding to all."

Brooches with bird-head ornamentation have been found on the sites of Lake Dwellings. Petrie states that it is observable on early croziers. Fig. 41 represents a very curious bronze instrument found, about the year 1829, in a bog in the townland of Dunaverney, within two miles of Ballymoney, county Antrim, together with fragments of wooden vessels, a large bronze pin, and some stone hatchets. This curious antique is made in three parts (A, B), joined by pieces of oak inlaid with thin layers of bronze. At one extremity is a double hook, at the other a movable ring. The superior portion of the instrument, as seen in the engraving, is perforated at unequal distances with seven holes, through each of which a wire passes, terminated on one side by a bird and at the other by a ring. This portion is hollow and contains a bronze wire with a zigzag pattern (see fig. 42). At E and F (fig. 41) are two holes about one-eighth of an inch in diameter. The representations of birds, on this curious relic, point to the workmanship not being earlier than the sixth century.

Fig. 42.
Pattern of Bronze Wire running through centre of hollow in fig. 41. Full size.

Another instrument five inches longer than the foregoing, but of similar make, was discovered, in the year 1851, in the townland of Lurgy, three miles from Dungannon, county Tyrone. It possesses neither rings, nor birds, but was otherwise perfect. Petrie,

who brought under notice the first described antique, admitted that he was totally unable to form even a rational conjecture as to its probable use. Another antiquarian was of opinion that it was employed either for divination—as by a little sleight-of-hand the birds could be moved to suit the design of the officiating priest—or for sacrificial purposes.

A hen in the farmyard that can crow like her spouse, is considered to bring bad luck to the household ; in some localities it is even regarded as a death herald. We have the well-known, and to the fair sex, uncomplimentary rhyme :—

> "A whistling maid and a crowing hen,
> Are good for neither God nor men."

It is good for mortals, however, that the cock should crow, for by his voice all respectable ghosts are regulated, and at the first sound of his morning notes, they cease to trouble the living and return to their proper abode. If a hen crows when roosting in a cabin, it is a sure sign that it is "fairy struck." It must be at once caught, its head cut off and flung on the floor, or one of the inmates of the household will die within the twelvemonth.

A clocking hen should never be lent. It is lucky for a hen and chickens to stray into the house; if a cock comes to the threshold and crows, visitors are coming.

If anyone is sick in a cabin, and a cock turns his head to the hearth and crows, the patient will recover, but if it turns its head to the door whilst crowing, the sick one will die.

Neither destroy, remove, nor rob the nests of swallows that build about the house ; they bring luck, and if you injure them, you will certainly suffer. It is fear alone "that saves a swallow from injury, for it is equally well known that every swallow has in him three drops of the Devil's blood." He is thus sometimes called the "Devil's Bird." There is the strange belief that on everyone's head there is a certain hair, which, if plucked by the swallow, dooms the unfortunate loser to irretrievable misfortune.

If swallows fly low, they are said to foretell approaching rain ; if they fly high, they announce continued fine weather. Thus Gay says :—

> "When swallows fleet soar high, and sport in air,
> He told us that the welkin would be clear."

A water-wagtail near the house heralds bad news. Whilst a man was lying ill with a virulent fever, a water-wagtail came

regularly and pecked at the window pane, and even after his death, the bird still returned each morning and tapped at the glass as before. Then the family knew that further misfortune was in store, and the evil came as foretold; another person was suddenly taken ill and died.

A friend of O'Donovan's gave the following account of the superstition regarding this little bird:—The incident which occurred in November, 1820, was the death of a water-wagtail which killed itself by flying against one of the windows of the bedroom in which lay a dying person. "This trifling event was made curiously interesting by a sister of the sick person, who was living in the house, stating over and over again, from day to day, that she felt sure her brother would live till after a bird of this kind should kill itself at the window, for one had done so in several previous cases, where members of our family had died in that room. Indeed she went so far as to maintain, that it was always the case, and was preserved as a tradition in the family. I certainly gave little heed to what she said, till I was startled from my reading at the window indicated, by a bird of this kind striking the window with great force, and falling on the window-stool stunned, and thence rolling off on the roof of a pantry or office beneath, off which I, in a few minutes after picked up the bird dead, and brought it to the lady who had actually predicted the fact. It satisfied the family that the time was at hand, that all had been looking to for some weeks."

Sir Thomas Browne remarks that "Few ears have escaped the noise of the death-watch, that is, the little clicking sound heard often in many rooms, somewhat resembling that of a watch; and this is conceived to be an evil omen or prediction of some person's death; wherein, notwithstanding, there is nothing of rational presage or just cause of terror. For this noise is made by a little sheath-winged, grey insect (*Anobium tessellatum*) found often in wainscot, benches, and woodwork in the summer. We have often taken many thereof, and kept them in thin boxes, wherein I have seen and heard them work and knock with a little proboscis or trunk against the side of the box like a *Picus martius*, or woodpecker, against a tree. It worketh best in warm weather, and for the most part giveth not over but under nine or eleven strokes at a time. He that could extinguish the terrifying apprehensions hereof, might prevent the passions of the heart, and many cold sweats in grandmothers and nurses, who, in the sickness of children, are so startled with these noises."

It is strange that so many people should, despite the very obvious origin of the noise, even still regard the tapping made by this little insect as an omen of death. Dean Swift wrote the

following amusing, as well as practical, charm to avert the fatal omen:—

> " . . . . . A wood worm
> That lies in old wood, like a hare in her form;
> With teeth or with claws it will bite or will scratch,
> And chambermaids christen the worm a death-watch:
> Because like a watch, it always cries click:
> Then woe be to those in the house who are sick;
> For as sure as a gun they will give up the ghost,
> If the maggot cries click when it scratches the post.
> But a kettle of scalding hot water injected,
> Infallibly cures the timbers affected;
> The omen is broken, the danger is over,
> The maggot will die, and the sick will recover."

In early days in Ireland the swan was doubtless the totem of some tribe, as an Irish saying, thus translated, demonstrates the intensity of belief in its sanctity:—

> "Then was it Erin's sons, listening to that cry,
> Decreed 'that man who slays a swan shall die.'"

Lir was an ocean-god common to Ireland and Britain, and, as already narrated (vol. i., pp. 147, 148), his children were, by enchantment, turned into swans, "and the men of Erin were so grieved at their departure, that they made a law and proclaimed it throughout the land that no one should kill a swan in Erin, from that time forth. In Welsh histories he appears as Lear."* In modern days in Ireland, the prohibition is "more honour'd in the breach, than the observance."

The movements of swans are regarded as heralding good or bad weather. They are also supposed "to sing before they die," and on this superstition Coleridge wittily remarks:—

> " . . . . 'twere no bad thing,
> Should certain persons die before they sing."

Some of the country people in the county Sligo—and, doubtless, elsewhere—still firmly believe that the barnacle goose, which breeds in the high northern latitudes, *i.e.* Iceland, Lapland, &c., but is a winter visitant to our sea-coast, is really propagated from the cirriped marine shell-fish so often found adhering to wooden piles and hulks of vessels; but, in this idea, they are not singular, for, in former times, even learned writers gravely affirmed the same. Probably the delusion first arose from the designation, "barnacle," being common to both. It was long, however, before truth prevailed, and the absurd doctrine of the generation of these sea-fowl was finally refuted.

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* *The Evil Eye*, F. T. Elworthy, pp. 89, 90.

Giraldus Cambrensis, as early as the twelfth century, promulgated this view in his *Topographia Hiberniæ*. Sir John Maundeville, and Gerarde, in his *Herball*, both allude to it. Du Bartas describes the various transformations of this bird, on which Meyer wrote a treatise, and which Sir Robert Murray describes in *Philosophical Transactions*.

The possession of peacocks' feathers brings ill-luck. When peacocks make a loud shrill and discordant noise they are said to predict rain, and the more they scream the heavier the downpour that is coming. This is an imported item of folk-lore.

It seems very strange that the folklore pertaining to the magpie accompanied it, on its introduction into Ireland, late in the seventeenth, or early in the eighteenth century. Thus we have amongst us the English popular rhyme regarding the appearances of magpies :—

> "One for anger,
> Two for mirth,
> Three for a wedding,
> Four for a birth,
> Five for rich,
> Six for poor,
> Seven for a witch,
> I can tell you no more."

Derrick who, in 1581, wrote the *Image of Ireland*, says :—

> "No Pies to plucke the thatch from house,
> Are breed on Irish Grounde:
> But worse than Pies, the same to burne,
> A thousand maie be founde."

Moryson, writing in 1617, states that the "Chattering Pye" was not present in Ireland; and Smith, in 1774, in his *History of Cork*, states that "the magpie, or piant, was not known in Ireland seventy years ago, but they are now very common."

Many other instances of the importance attached to the appearance and movements of birds might be given; that of the wren, an object of superstitious veneration amongst the Pagan Irish, shall here suffice. In Cormac's Glossary, the word *drean*, *i. e.* wren, is explained as "*Draói-en*, a Druid bird, a bird that makes a prediction." From hence is probably derived the saying, "a little bird has told me." In a life of St. Molaing, it is recounted that, as the saint was reading a book, the *Magus Avium*, so-called "because to certain individuals it furnishes auguries," came flying to him. A bird which was an object of respect to the Druids became, almost of necessity, an object of aversion to the Christian priesthood; and the triumphant religion signalised its ascendancy by endeavouring

to extirpate any object which appeared to resist it; for in striving to effect the destruction of "the king of all birds," the priests wished to deal a death-blow to the superstitious science of augury.

"For some weeks preceding Christmas, crowds of village boys may be seen peering into the hedges, in search of the 'tiny wren'; and when one is discovered, the whole assemble and give eager chase to, until they have slain the little bird. In the hunt, the utmost excitement prevails; shouting, screeching, and rushing; all sorts of missiles are flung at the puny mark; and, not unfrequently they light upon the head of some less innocent being. From bush to bush, from hedge to hedge, is the wren pursued until bagged with as much pride and pleasure as the cock of the woods by the more ambitious sportsman. The stranger is utterly at a loss to conceive the cause of this hubbub, or the motive for so much energy in pursuit of such small gear. On the anniversary of St. Stephen (the 26th of December) the enigma is explained. Attached to a huge holly-bush, elevated on a pole, the bodies of several little wrens are borne about. This bush is an object of admiration in proportion to the number of dependent birds, and is carried through the streets in procession, by a troop of boys, among whom may be usually found children of a larger growth, shouting and roaring as they proceed along, and every now and then stopping before some popular house where they hope to obtain money" (fig. 43), and at the same time singing (fig. 44) the following rhyme:—

"The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,
St. Stephen's day was caught in the furze,
Although he is little, his family's great,
I pray you, good landlady, give us a treat.

"My box would speak if it had but a tongue,
And two or three shillings would do it no wrong,
Sing holly, sing ivy; sing ivy, sing holly,
A drop just to drink, it would drown melancholy.

"And if you draw it of the best,
I hope in Heaven your soul will rest;
But if you draw it of the small,
It won't agree with the wren boys at all."

A legend narrates that some soldiers of the army of William III. were awakened by the noise of a wren pecking on the drum-head. The drummer beat to arms, and an intended surprise by the Jacobites was thus frustrated. Hence, the little bird was a favourite with the Williamites, and was persecuted by the Jacobite peasantry. This legend is even carried back to Danish times;

but both accounts appear to have been manufactured with the object of accounting for the prevailing custom.

According to another account this singular practice was founded on a tradition that, in days gone by, a beautiful but malignant fairy—some say Cleena (see vol. i., p. 372)—exercised such fascination over young men, that she induced numbers to follow her to the seashore, where they were drowned in the ocean, into which she enticed them. This continued for a lengthened period, until at length one young man discovered the charm for counteracting the arts of the enchantress, and not only evaded her spells, but laid a plot for her destruction, which she only escaped by taking the form of a wren. It was decreed that, as a punishment for her crimes, she should resume this form on each succeeding Christmas Day, and that she should ultimately fall by mortal hand. Hence, it is alleged originated the barbarous practice of hunting the wren.

Fig. 43.

"The Wren Boys."
From Mr. and Mrs. Hall's *Ireland.*

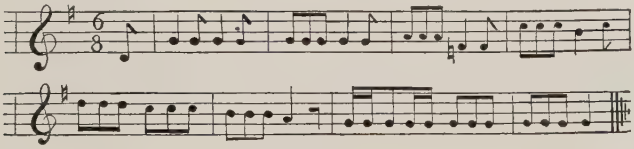

Fig. 44.

The Air sung by "the Wren Boys." From Mr. and Mrs. Hall's *Ireland.*

Another legend, by no means confined to the Gaelic, accounts for the importance attached to the tiny wren in the following manner:—The birds desiring to have a king to rule over them, assembled to discuss the matter. It was finally agreed that the bird who could fly highest should be elected. The eagle felt sure of the kingly honour, as he of all the birds could go nearest the sun, when, to the astonishment of the assembly, the wren came forward and asked permission to compete. Up soared the eagle, and when he could not attain a higher position and had

commenced his descent, he scornfully exclaimed, "where are you now, little wren?" The answer was prompt; "here, up above you"; for the wren had hid itself in the feathers on the eagle's back. So its cunning prevailed over superior strength, and it was awarded the crown. Even in the present day to dream of the little bird is considered to herald good fortune; to dream you kill one is a portent of evil. In the Isle of Man, a feather taken from a wren was formerly considered a most efficacious protection against shipwreck, and Manx fishermen would seldom put to sea without knowing their boat to be thus safeguarded.

In an ancient poem, attributed to St. Columbkille, and translated by O'Donovan, it is evident that the saint alludes to various kinds of divination:—

> "It is not with the *Sreod* our destiny is,
> Nor with the bird on the top of the twig,
> Nor with the trunk of a knotty tree.
> . . . . . .
>
> I adore not the voice of birds,
> Nor the *Sreod*, nor a destiny on the earthly world,
> Nor a son, nor chance, nor woman,
> My Druid is Christ, the Son of God."

Sreod is stated, in *Historia Britonum* of Nennius, to signify "sneezing"; as an omen here enumerated in conjunction with other omens, this translation of the word seems to be a very likely solution of the enigma.

The superstition regarding sneezing is of almost world-wide distribution. Amongst the Singalese, as well as amongst the Malabarese, if a person sneezes suddenly, when anyone is about to commence work, to take food or drink, or start on a journey, the hearer allows a short interval to elapse before he resumes the intended occupation.

The act of sneezing was, under certain circumstances, considered an auspicious omen amongst the ancients; we find Penelope regarding it in this light:—

> "She spoke—Telemachus then sneez'd aloud;
> Constrain'd, his nostrils echoed through the crowd;
> The smiling queen the happy omen bless'd;
> So may these impious fall by fate oppress'd."

Pliny says that sneezing in the morning was unlucky; at noon lucky; to sneeze to the right hand was also lucky, but to sneeze to the left hand the reverse. When anyone sneezed amongst the Romans they cried "salvere jusserunt," or, as we say, "save us." The idea being that sneezing was occasioned by

some demon. Aristotle states that sneezing is "a motion of the brain, which through the nostrils expels what is offensive, and in some degree demonstrates internal strength," and adds, "that medical people, if they were able to provoke the act of sneezing from their patients who might be thought dangerously indisposed, conceived hopes of their recovery."

Amongst the Irish, sneezing was a proof that an evil spirit was attempting to gain access to the body, so an invocation was necessary to drive it away; on the other hand, a child that never sneezes is regarded as under a spell. According to an old Jewish story, the custom of saying "God bless you," when a person sneezes, dates from the days of the Patriarch Jacob. Before his time, whoever sneezed died of the shock. This fragility of primitive man was, at the intercession of Jacob, remedied by the Almighty, on condition that a sneeze should universally be hallowed by the formula, "God bless you."

CHAPTER V.

TREE WORSHIP—HERBS AND MEDICINE.

Worship of Trees at one time almost universal—Solitary growing Trees held in great veneration by the Irish—Sacred Trees—The Tree an Emblem of Life—Properties ascribed to the Rowan—The Thorn—The Alder—The Willow—Knowledge of the Medicinal Properties of Flowers, Herbs, and Roots, possessed by the Druids—Weapons Poisoned with Vegetable Decoctions—The Primitive Surgeon—The Primitive Physician—The Use of Poisons—The Science of Medicine—The Treatment of the Insane—Medicine Men—Witch Doctors—Wise Women—They possessed a large Pharmacopœia—Witchcraft—The Treatment of Witches—Clergy opposed to Progress in Medicine—Enumeration of Remedies employed by Witch-doctors—The use of Saliva—Fairies the Guardians of Healing Herbs—Precautions taken to circumvent them—Unlucky to cut Finger-nails or Hair without certain Ceremonies—The idea wide-spread—The Elixir of Life—The Magic Caldron—The ancient physician diagnosed disease by the character of the groans emitted by the sufferer—Paid on the principle of "no cure no pay."

Tree worship is usually, if not indeed always, linked with, but overshadowed by, other cults, such as the adoration of the sun, of water, of animals, or of stones, all enshrining or symbolising a divine principle; but no other ritual, save perhaps that of water, has been so widely distributed, or has left behind such prominent marks to guide our footsteps in the murky twilight of primitive thought. To us, as to the men of old, the tree is still the emblem and cause of fertility; as those who, in any country, have pared the forest to the stump, have, but too late, discovered to their cost.

At some very early period of the world's at present unwritten history, the worship of trees appears to have been almost universal, for the further back we go the more multiform become the mythological interpretations of the world; everything was personified in a manner common to animal and human consciousness alike, and it does not show much judgment to subscribe to what a recent writer terms the "literary heresy," that the worship of nature was one of the discoveries of the Renaissance.

Long ages before, the genius of the Greek for personification placed but a thin veil of mythology between the gazer and nature, for he saw not natural objects but beautiful things.

In *Apollonius Rhodius*, a hamadryad is represented as beseeching a woodman to spare a tree to which her very existence was bound up :—

> "Loud through the air resounds the woodman's stroke,
> When, lo! a voice breaks from the groaning oak,
> 'Spare, spare my life! a trembling virgin spare!
> Oh, listen to the Hamadryad's prayer!
> No longer let that fearful axe resound;
> Preserve the tree to which my life is bound.
> See, from the bark my blood in torrents flows;
> I faint, I sink, I perish from your blows.'"

This idea of tree life frequently occurs amongst the literature of the ancient Romans. Thus Virgil, in the *Æneid* (Book viii.) :—

> "These woods were first the seat of sylvan powers,
> Of nymphs and fawns, and savage-men who took
> Their birth from trunks of trees and stubborn oak."

In ancient Babylonian or Chaldean religion there figures a most important object, the sacred tree, the Tree of Life. If we turn to the Bible we read of the trees of life and of knowledge, and in later times of sacrifices under trees. The Pentateuchal laws condemned the high places of Israel with their associated symbol of the sacred tree or pole, in Hebrew *ashera*, unfortunately translated *grove* in the authorised version of the Old Testament. Sacred trees are frequently mentioned in the Pentateuch.

Amongst the old Norse, life was figured as a tree. Edward Clodd, F.R.A.S., remarks that "The warm climate of Europe at the close of the great Ice Age favoured the growth of vegetation, and the whole of the northern part became covered with dense forests, in which oaks of large size abounded, the wooded region stretching beyond the Arctic circle. This, in large degree, explains why, amidst the varied objects of their worship, which included stones as well as living things, that of trees played so leading a part among the Aryans; relics of it survive all over Europe, in the groups of customs and festivals connected with agriculture and the seasons. All through nature there are the ever recurring events of birth and death, of fruitfulness and decay, of destruction for the sake of reproduction, every grave being the cradle of another form of life. Hence all the festivals rich in flowers and fruits, and the offerings of these to the gods of fruitfulness; hence, too, the ceremonies of weeping over the death, and of rejoicing over the birth of nature-gods." Tree-worship, like all nature-worship is based upon the old belief in

all-present life spoken of above. Trees and plants grow, "bleed when cut (sounds issuing from them sometimes when wounded), wither, become old and die. So they are credited with a life like that of man." The life, apparently locked up in the tree during the long winter, bursts out in spring, in summer, in autumn, in bud, in leaf, in flower and fruit. The leaves and branches murmur in the zephyr, moan in the breeze, and shriek in the gale. Was not this all irrefutable evidence of an indwelling spirit, that slept and awoke, that died and came to life again.

Solitary-growing trees were held in great veneration by the old Irish; under some of them their chiefs were inaugurated, or periodical games celebrated, and they were regarded with intense veneration, for "there exists abundant evidence of the fact," remarks W. F. Wakeman, "that in ante-Christian days natives of Erin, in common with those of the British Islands generally, were wont to worship certain trees."

Billa—signifying a large tree, was the term used by the Irish when describing sacred trees—now anglicised bell and bellow trees, and absurd stories, founded on these designations, may be heard recounted of their origin. Tree worship was probably the same in Erin, as that practised elsewhere, and which Grant Allen sums up thus:—"I do not mean for a moment to assert, or even suggest, that every individual sacred tree grows, or ever grew, on the grave of a dead person, but I do mean to say that, as far as I can see, the notion of the sanctity of trees, or plants, could only have arisen, in the first place, from the reverence paid to trees or plants which actually sprang from the remains of the dead, and so were regarded—like everything else that came out of the tomb—as embodiments, or avatars, of the dead man's spirit." In the parish of Ockley, some graves had rose-trees at the head and foot, and it is stated that in former times the parishioners thought the soul of the deceased passed into the plant growing on the grave. In the Scottish ballad of "Fair Margaret and Sweet William" it is related, that after their death—

> "Out of her breast there sprang a rose,
> And out of his a briar;
> They grew till they grew unto the church top,
> And there they tied in a true lover's knot."

The Pantheist is probably not so far from the truth. St. Paul showed a readiness to meet the philosophic pantheism of the Greeks, whilst addressing them on Mars Hill, when he said that in God "we live and move and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said, we are also His offspring." And, again, in writing to the Colossians, he says, God "is above

all things, and by Him all things consist." Nature seems everywhere endowed with life; what was once thought special to animal life is now found to be common to it and to plant life, and there is a "series of fundamental correspondence between plant and animal which points to the merging of their apparent differences in one common origin."

A poem lately written by Mr. William Watson, entitled "The unknown God," is seemingly a plea for pantheism; in it he introduces the pantheism which appears to permeate one of the newly discovered logia (placed in italics):—

> "The God I know of, I shall ne'er
> Know, though He dwells exceeding nigh.
> *Raise thou the stone and find me there,*
> *Cleave thou the wood and there am I,*
> Yea, in my flesh His spirit doth flow,
> Too near, too far, for me to know."

The idea of the tree as an emblem of life may be seen in a heraldic representation of the descent of a family from some remote ancestor; and Edward Clodd, F.R.A.S., utilises the same simile when he states that "The only true mode of presentment, both of the life that is, and that was, is that of a tree with short trunk, indicating the common origin of the living from the non-living, and divided into two trunks representing plants and animals respectively. From each of these start large branches representing classes, the larger branches giving off smaller branches representing families, and so on with smaller and smaller branches representing orders and genera until we come to leaves, as representing species, the height of the branch from which they are hanging indicating their place in the growth of the great life tree."

The rowan or mountain ash is still popularly supposed, in country places, to have a peculiar virtue against the attacks of fairies, witches, or malign influences. When the dairy-maid churns for a long time without making butter, she will stir the cream with a twig of rowan, and strike the cow with another, thus breaking the witch's spell. Bishop Heber, in his *Journey in India*, states that he "passed a fine tree of the mimosa, resembling greatly, at a distance, the mountain ash. A sprig of this tree, worn in the turban or suspended over the bed, is supposed to be a perfect security against all spells and 'the evil eye.' The superstition which, in the British Isles, attaches to the rowan tree is here applied to a tree of nearly similar form."

According to all tradition the mountain ash was a favourite tree with the pagans, and with it are still associated many popular superstitions. The old Irish believed that the first man

sprang from an alder, the first woman from a mountain ash. Both trees are still believed to be endowed with mystic properties. On May Eve withes, made of the branches of the mountain ash, are tied round the horns of cows; temporary hoops, formed in the same way, are placed round churns, as a spell to counteract the power of witches and fairies, always busily engaged before sunrise on May morning, in endeavouring to steal the butter of poor hard-working farmers.

Some of its many properties are alluded to in the tale of "Dermod and Grania," where the eating of three of its berries, fasting, in the morning, preserves from all diseases. Those thus feeding feel as it were the exhilaration of wine, and, however aged, become rejuvenescent, for the centenarian again resumes the prime of manhood. Many of its virtues have been already enumerated, but it may also be mentioned that crosses, formed of twigs of mountain ash, are still placed over the doors of the houses of the peasantry, attached to the thatch, as a protection against witchcraft and fairies.

The white-thorn, according to Aryan tradition, sprang originally from the lightning: hence it acquired a wide reverence, and became invested with many supernatural properties. It was, amongst other things, associated with marriage rites. The Grecian bride was, and still is, decked with its blossoms, and the torch which lighted the Roman bridal couple to their nuptial chamber on the wedding-eve was formed of its wood. "It is evident, therefore, that the white-thorn was considered a sacred tree long before Christian tradition identified it as forming the Crown of Thorns; a mediæval belief which further enhanced the sanctity attached to it. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Irish consider it unlucky to cut down this holy tree." When it grows alone near the banks of streams, or on forts, it is considered to be the haunt and peculiar abode of the fairies, and as such is not to be disturbed without risk, sooner or later, of personal danger to the person so offending. "Don't tamper with the 'lone bush'" is rustic warning everywhere in the remote parts of Ireland. From the custody of the fairies the thorn trees are sometimes transferred to that of the saints. "Skeagh Padrig," or "Patrick's Bush," an aged thorn growing out of a cleft in a rock, from under which a stream of water flows, is situated near Tinahely, in Wicklow. Devotees attended on the 4th of May, rounds were duly made about the well, and shreds were torn off their garments and hung on the thorn.

One daring man, who had uprooted a few hawthorn bushes in a fairy circle, was found next morning paralysed in his bed. The fairies often visibly protect their property. A sacrilegious farmer, bent on clearing a large earthen fort from a well-

developed growth of bushwood, when proceeding to cut down the first bush, was politely entreated by a mannikin to spare it, and to try the next. At the next bush he was encountered by another pigmy who repeated the same request. He was thus sent from bush to bush, and in the end was found wandering about the fort quite distraught. A terrible judgment falls on the person who first digs within a "fort," particularly one on which these bushes grow.

Sir Walter Scott, with a mind imbued with Celtic thought, thus apostrophizes the thorn and other mystic trees :—

> "Yon lonely thorn, would he could tell
> The changes of his parent dell.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Would he could tell how deep the shade,
> A thousand mingled branches made;
> How broad the shadows of the oak,
> How clung the rowan to the rock,
> And through the foliage showed his head,
> With narrow leaves, and berries red;
> What pines on every mountain sprung,
> O'er every dell what birches hung,
> In every breeze what aspens shook,
> What alders shaded every brook?"

It is both unlucky as well as dangerous to meddle with any tree regarded as sacred. During a severe winter a farmer cut off some branches from an alder that overshadowed an ancient holy well. Whilst thus engaged he happened to look towards his house and saw it in flames. Hastening home he found no appearance of fire, so he returned to his work of desecration, when again the flames rose high over his cottage, and again he hastened to extinguish the conflagration, but with the same result, all was safe at his home. Determined not to be disappointed a third time in procuring fire-wood he returned to the tree, lopped off as much as he required from the sacred alder and carried the bundle home, when, to his dismay, he found his cottage was this time, in reality, burned to the ground.

With us the willow is associated with the idea of sorrow and mourning, but, by the Irish, it was believed to possess the gift of inspiring an uncontrollable inclination to dance. To produce this effect a willow wand, pared to a quadrangular figure, having cut upon it some mysterious spells, and placed over the lintel of a door, caused all the inmates of the house incontinently to dance.

The Irish scholar, O'Donovan, goes so far as to state that every place in Ireland bearing the name of *Creeve* had originally a sacred tree, of widely extending branches, planted for the purpose of inauguration, or to commemorate the death of some famous personage. Sacred fires were no doubt often kindled

under these trees, as there are many localities named Billatinny or the "old" or "sacred tree of the fire."

The sacred tree may be likened to the tree of Ygdrasil, with its roots in Heaven, or to that tree whose hoary branches Æneas saw at the entrance to Avernus :—

> "Ulmus opaca, ingens, quam sedem Somnia volgo
> Vana tenere ferent, foliisque sub omnibus haerent."*

Fig. 45 represents a sacred tree in the parish of Clenor, county Cork, generally known as *Crann a hulla.* It is a stunted ash, growing in a lofty, bleak situation, and has been estimated as not much over three centuries old. It is most probably a seedling or offshoot from the parent tree which it has replaced.

Fig. 45.

Sacred Tree in the parish of Clenor, County Cork. Reproduced from the *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archæological Society.*

Although the tree is unprotected, "and fuel must have been exceedingly scarce in the locality, no turf-bog being nearer than

* "Full in the midst a spreading elm displayed
His aged arms, and cast a mighty shade;
Each trembling leaf with some light visions teems,
And leaves impregnated with airy dreams."

seven or eight miles," still as much as a branch was never lopped off. There was also in the neighbourhood, in the townland of Killura, another tree sacred to St. Craebhnat; but the treatment meted out to it was quite different from that accorded to *Crann a hulla*. The properties distinctive of the Killura tree were, that no one who was in possession of the least portion of it could be drowned. Emigrants, far and near, accordingly provided themselves with chips or twigs, until at last the tree entirely disappeared. This occurred about thirty years ago. "I have not heard," remarks Mr. James Byrne, M.R.C.S., "how this legend arose that this tree possessed those life-preserving powers; but it is very probable that St. Craebhnat had some extraordinary escape from drowning, or he rescued some drowning person."

Fig. 46 depicts the remains of a huge ash called the Big Bell Tree, growing in the neighbourhood of Borrisokane, county Tipperary, as it appeared in the year 1833. At first sight it looks as if there were two separate trees, but it is in reality all that had survived of a trunk formerly at least 30 feet in circumference. It is traditionally recorded that in whatever house the smallest portion of this tree was burned that house was ultimately also burned.

FIG. 46.

"Big Bell Tree" at Borrisokane, Co. Tipperary, as it appeared in the year 1833. Reproduced from the *Dublin Penny Journal*.

Fitzgerald, in his *Vestiges and Relics of Youghal*, speaks of sacred trees. One, he mentions, stood at Crownahulla, or Anakisha, near Doneraile, the branches of which, it was asserted, could not be burned. The townland of Billa, in the parish of Ballysadare, and a locality called Crannmore, in the town of Sligo, probably both derived their name from some sacred tree. "Honey tree" is the remarkable designation of an old sycamore in the townland of Coollemoneen, parish of Killadoon, and is so styled on the Ordnance Survey maps. It stands on a mound surrounded by stones, some of which are so disposed as to simulate the form of a rude altar. Like many other and solitary-growing trees, it has legends and traditions attached to it, some of which are yet current among old people in the neighbourhood. Another remarkable tree in the parish of Kilmacteige is styled

"the fern tree." Dr. P. W. Joyce remarks that "one of the greatest triumphs that a tribe could achieve over their enemies was to cut down their inauguration tree, and no outrage was more keenly resented, and, when possible, visited with sharper retribution."

Knowledge of the medicinal properties of the flowers, herbs and roots of the country,* was probably possessed by the Druids to a greater extent than is generally supposed, and weapons poisoned with vegetable decoctions were, it is alleged, employed. Keating, in his fabulous *History of Ireland*, recounts how, many centuries before the Christian Era, a king of Leinster, hardly pressed by enemies armed with poisoned weapons, consulted his Druid, who counselled him to have a magical bath prepared before the next battle. As fast as the king's warriors were wounded they were plunged into the caldron, from which they emerged perfectly cured. Again in the third century, in the days of Cormac Mac Art, a Leinster chief named Aengus owned a celebrated weapon, and from possessing it he was styled "Aengus of the poison spear." In an Irish MS. entitled "The Adventures of Seven Irish Champions in the East," the Sea-God Mananan Mac Lir is represented as instructing Cuchullin in the use of a sting extracted from a *piast* or serpent that infested a certain lake, and this myth would appear to have some bearing on the use of poisoned weapons in Ireland.

In *The Dialogue of the Sages*, a tract in the *Book of Lismore*, there are several passages referring to the use of these deadly arms; for instance, a warrior possessed a "lucky poisoned spear," the venom with which it was coated being of such fatal character that it never wounded a person who did not immediately die of the effects of the poison.

The large average size of Irish flint arrowheads militates against the supposition of their having been poisoned. The size of arrowheads gives a faint indication towards the solution of the question, for if missiles are diminutive (a few might have been fabricated, say for killing small birds) and are found in abundance, there is the more likelihood of their having been originally envenomed. A heavy weapon launched by the hand, or by a powerful bow or slinging stick, would stop a wounded man or animal by its mere weight, and the shock occasioned by it; whilst the lighter and less effective missile would require some other agent to render it effective.

* In later times dyes for colouring homespuns were obtained from indigenous plants. The ragweed gives a yellow dye, whilst heather and water-lily roots yield brown and dark colours.

The primitive surgeon and physician were of the most rough and ready type. If the patient was bruised or wounded, the part affected was rubbed or sucked. Hence "*massage*" was one of the very earliest modes of treatment of painful affections. If you "bark" your shin, you mechanically commence rubbing the part affected, unconsciously practising primitive "*massage.*" By slow degrees the budding Esculapius learned that it was better for his patient to lose a limb than for him to die in trying to retain it. Trepanning was actually practised in the Neolithic ages, and if it was performed with the object of freeing an imaginary demon which held possession of the subject where the modern operator lectures on the effects of pressure or of the presence of bacteria, the difference is, after all, mainly one of terms. Long words do not create new diseases, neither do they create new panaceas.

The use of poisons and the science of medicine, in their earliest professional stages, are closely connected with religion. The most eminent and successful cultivators of these sciences, in various countries, were, in ancient times, after their decease, raised to the rank of divinities by their grateful admirers. It was so in the case of Esculapius, Chiron, and the Irish Dianket. To the disciples of the latter belonged, in late pagan times, the carefully elaborated machinery of oracles, omens, auguries, exorcisms, dream-interpretations, visions, as well as the knowledge of the qualities of plants useful for medicinal purposes, the proper times and seasons for collecting them, together with all the ritual ceremonies proper to their use and application.

To the "medicine man" of America we owe the discovery of the properties of many drugs. An American "medicine man" has some knowledge of human and animal anatomy, and an Irish Druid was probably equally skilled. Simple ailments are relieved, as was the case formerly in Ireland, by the heat of the "sweat-house."

Irish sweat-houses were of two kinds, the permanent erections built of stone in bee-hive form, and those formed merely of wattles and scraws.

The hot-air bath, now-a-days designated the "Turkish Bath," itself but a degenerated imitation of the luxurious edifices of ancient Greece and Imperial Rome, was in common use amongst the ancient Irish, and lingered on until the middle of the nineteenth century. The late Professor H. Hennessy, F.R.S., states that what are called "Turkish" baths in Ireland and Great Britain are styled "Roman-Irish" baths in Germany and Bohemia. He saw baths designated *Römische-Irische Bäder* in the year 1879 at Prague, as well as at Nuremburg. In Ireland, a small, uncemented stone structure, erected for the purpose of being utilized

as a hot-air bath, is designated by the natives *Teach-an-alais*, i.e. a "sweat-house"; many of them yet remain (fig. 47). They were generally of beehive shape, covered with clay, and having a low entrance. The manner of heating the chamber appears to have consisted in filling it with turf, igniting the fuel, and when consumed, the ashes were cleared out, and as soon as the floor and sides of the interior had sufficiently cooled down, the floor was strewed with green rushes; the person or persons intending to take the bath entered the heated chamber, and the door was closed by means of a temporary screen. This hot-air bath was much used down to recent times, not only for pleasure, but also as a cure for rheumatism, for which latter purpose it would seem to have been eminently successful. In some cases it is stated that a pool of fresh water, if in the immediate vicinity, was utilized as a plunge-bath for the perspiring bather who, having remained in the heated interior as long as practicable, would then cool himself in the water, and again return.

Fig. 47.

"Sweat-house," Island of Inishmurray.
Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

Mr. S. F. Milligan, M.R.I.A., writing on the ancient Irish hot-air bath, states:—"Up to comparatively recent times the hot-air bath was known over many parts of this country as a cure for rheumatism. In the localities where the English and Scottish settlers were in the majority it fell into disuse; but amongst the Irish-speaking inhabitants its value was fully known and appreciated." Whilst exploring the country lying between Blacklion, county Cavan, and the borders of Leitrim, he accidentally discovered a "sweat-house," and inquiry elicited the information that it had been frequently used by people suffering from rheumatism, and but two weeks previously to his visit it had been occupied by people who had come from some distance for the

cure (fig. 48); there was another similar structure in the townland of Toam, about three miles distant.

In the village of Cappagh, near Pomeroy, in the Highlands of Tyrone, an old man remembers a sweat-house in constant use, in which he took baths himself. In this place a tank was attached to the sweat-house, about five feet in depth, into which the person plunged after leaving it. Several dips into this pool, followed by a good rubbing, was the mode adopted.

Near Maghera, county Derry, Mr. Milligan found another "sweat-house" situated in a secluded glen off the ordinary track and locally known as the "sweat-house" even by people who had no knowledge of its original use. There is a small hole in the roof, into which a stone fits like a cork into a bottle. This

Fig. 48.

"Sweat-house," in the neighbourhood of Blacklion, County Cavan.
Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

stone can be taken out when the fire is lighted, and replaced when the interior is heated, and free from smoke. There were five stone seats placed around inside, on which sods were placed. At a short distance outside there is a pool of water forming an excellent plunge bath. In the county Monaghan, people still take the hot-air bath in the following manner:—"A number of bricks are heated to redness in the fire; they are then placed under a creel; the person who wants to induce perspiration sits on it, with a pair of blankets fastened round his neck enclosing all; a good sweat is procured in this way." Special herbs were put under the creel, in some places, to give the patient the benefits of inhalation and fumigation.

Mr. Patrick Shields, of Altmore Lodge, county Tyrone, gives the following interesting information regarding sweat-houses :—

He states that they were common up to fifty years ago. The last remaining one has not been used for twenty years, and the ruins have now almost disappeared. Fifty years ago there was one in a glen near Altmore Chapel, to which people came to get cured of rheumatism. It was built like a beehive, seven feet wide and seven feet high; and was roofed with large flags, except a very small opening on the top. The door, four feet high, was closed by a stone flag kept for the purpose.

Fig. 49.

Sweat-House at Assaroe, Ballyshannon.
Reproduced from the *Ulster Journal of Archæology* (Second Series).

"It was heated by fires of turf; when sufficiently hot, the coals, ashes, &c., were removed, and some cool thing such as sods, rushes, or stones put in for the person or persons to stand upon. When men used it as many as six or eight stripped off and went in, when all openings were closed except what afforded a little ventilation. A person remained outside to attend to these matters. When they could suffer the heat no longer, the flag was removed, and they came out and plunged into a pool of water within a yard or two of the sweat-house, where they washed, got well rubbed, and put on their clothes. In case of women, they put on a bathing dress whilst using the bath, and generally omitted the plunge or cold bath. People had to be careful not to lean against the walls inside, otherwise they would get

burned. . . . . The plunge pool was always used here. The constructor was a cooper. He once come to me on crutches, having contracted rheumatism from lying on a damp bed. After four sweats he was quite well again, and continued so until his death which took place fifteen years ago. This was the last one used in this part of the country. My father remembers when there were three or four of them in the immediate vicinity. One was in a glen where I had a plantation. A stream of water runs through this glen, and on either side are rocks. The rock formed one half of the structure, either shaped by nature or by excavation. The front was built up with stones; no mortar was used;

FIG. 50.

Sweat-House at Kinlough, Co. Leitrim.
Reproduced from the *Ulster Journal of Archæology* (Second Series).

it was partly covered by the rock itself, and partly by flags, and was heated by burning heather and brambles in it. The stream was dammed up, and formed the bath."

A sweat-house at Assaroe, near Ballyshannon, described by Mr. F. W. Lockwood, was built on a somewhat smaller scale than the foregoing. In plan it is an irregular circle, having an inside diameter of a little over three feet with a height of six feet. The structure, covered with elder bushes and ivy, bears the appearance of age (fig. 49). Water was poured on the stones in the inside, when heated, thus converting it into a vapour- as well as a sweat-bath.

Another sweat-house at Brookhill, a mile from the village of Kinlough, county Leitrim (fig. 50), has an internal diameter of

four feet and a height of six feet. There is a small rivulet close at hand. Access to both structures was had by small creep-openings, with sloping jambs, about one foot seven inches in height by one foot ten inches in breadth.

Sweat-houses excavated in the ground or in banks of turf have long ago disappeared.

The Rev. John Groves, in his account of the parish of Errigal-Keroge, in the county of Tyrone, written at the commencement of the nineteenth century, states :—

"Among the mountains the country people make use of sweating-houses in several cases of sickness. These small hovels are partly scooped out of the side of a hill, and finished with rods, with a very small entrance. In one of them, when heated like an oven with charred turf, the patient stretches himself upon some straw, and the entrance is closed up. He there lies in a state of violent perspiration, caused by the close heat, so long as he or his physician thinks proper. This operation is, as usual, among the ignorant, considered a sovereign remedy against almost every disorder, but is chiefly used for rheumatic pains."

Another site in the county Tyrone is described as excavated out of a bank of turf, five feet high by five feet wide, with a flagged floor. The opening was closed with a bundle of heather, dog-grass, and ferns.

Russian baths, as used by the peasantry, bear a close resemblance to the Irish method. They usually consist of wooden houses situated, if possible, by the side of a running stream. In the bath-room is a large vaulted oven which, when heated, makes the paving-stones lying upon it red hot, and adjoining to the oven is a kettle fixed in masonry for the purpose of holding boiling water. The heat in the bath-room may be much increased by throwing water on the hot stones in the chamber of the oven. The Russian baths, therefore, are also vapour baths; and it appears as if most of the tribes of American Indians are acquainted with this plan. Lewis and Clarke, in their voyage up the Missouri, observed a vapour bath-house consisting of a hollow square about eight feet deep, formed in the river-bank, by damming up with mud the other three sides, and covering the whole completely except an aperture at the top about two feet wide. The bathers, taking with them a number of heated stones and jugs of water, descend by this hole, and, after seating themselves round the room, place the stones in the centre and throw water on them until the steam becomes of a temperature sufficiently high for their purpose.

The sweat-lodge—almost universal among Indian tribes—is, like the Irish "sweat-house," usually built on the margin of a stream. When the Indians bathe in the steam rising from water sprinkled

upon the heated stones, they generally sing religious songs, for the bath seems to be a semi-religious act of purification, as both danger and disease are believed to be averted through its agency. In diseases of a graver type the "medicine man" falls back upon his power as an exorcist. With drum, rattle, and chant, he seeks to expel from the sick man the malignant spirit which has seized upon him, and in one form the drum is still employed with us in religious ceremonies, in the use of that drum of metal now styled a bell.* The seat of pain is then ascertained by the "medicine man," and the after-treatment exactly resembles that of the present Irish herb-doctor." *Suction* acts as cupping—relieves congestion. The Irish "medicine man" sucks the spot affected by the pain with such severity as to raise blisters, and these often, by the counter-irritation so excited, effect a cure; but if this fails, he next pretends to spit out of his mouth frogs, thorns, stones, or anything the credulity of the sick man or his friends may accept as the origin of the disease.

For inflammation in the head, severe counter-irritation on the crown of the head has long been used and with great success by Irish "medicine men." The head is shaved, and a plaster applied, which is left on till a blister rises. Treatment by counter-irritation has, however, always been much employed by the medical profession.

A *Statistical Account* of the Union of Kilrush, written by the Rev. John Graham in the year 1815, states that "quack doctors abounded in all directions; who, beginning their operations on swine, cows, and horses, proceeded in their medical career, from drawing teeth and boiling herbs, to the more arduous tasks of reducing ruptures, amputating limbs, and managing fevers. Such practitioners could not fail to find abundant employment, creating it as they went along, and often disseminating variolous infection of the very worst description. One of this lion-hearted tribe was known in the year 1802 to adopt an experiment of Alexander the Great. He was called to the relief of a labourer in Carnacolla, when, finding some difficulty in reducing an inguinal hernia, he cut the Gordian-knot, and gave his patient a summary discharge from the troubles of this life."

From a pagan, as also from a Christian point of view, the lunatic or idiot was regarded as one whose body had become the abode of an evil spirit, or the temporary home of a god. In the first instance, the only cure was to frighten the demon away by

* The use of bells is not a custom of the early or mediæval church, but is of very ancient date. It was adopted from heathendom (see *ante*, vol. i., p. 197) into Christendom, though afterwards rejected by Mahomed.

torture or portentous exorcisms, in the second instance—as with every uncivilized race all the world over—the idiot was regarded with reverential awe, and the country people would no more think of intentionally maltreating such, than they would of injuring a little child, owing to the deep-rooted belief that irresponsible simpletons or idiots are in close contact with, and under the direct protection of God and the saints. In this there is a striking point of similarity to oriental custom. Yet with all their reverence for the idiot they seldom refrained, should occasion arise, from perpetrating a practical joke on such a one, care being, however, taken to avoid injuring the subject of their wit.

In contradistinction to paganism, with its concomitant cruelty, and Christianity with its madmen formerly caged and treated like wild beasts, modern science takes up a humane standpoint. It regards madness as a mere form of brain disease, its victims as objects for compassion, not for persecution ; and it considers gentle treatment far more likely, than harsh treatment, to effect restoration of reason. Many traces of the old rough and ready method yet survive. A person suffering from an ulcerated sore throat is taken, by the country people, by the two ears until the operators " shake the devil out of him." Governor Eyre, in his work on Australia, describes a similar performance, by native sorcerers, in attempting the cure of this ailment.

Exorcisms and incantations by an Irish " medicine man " or witch-doctor, were expensive operations, as a plentiful supply of whiskey was always administered as well to the adept as to the spectators. Lady Wilde thus describes the performances :—

" When any person in the village showed signs of madness this man (the witch-doctor) was sent for, and after a good pull at the whiskey, the caster-out of devils began his exorcism by pouring forth a torrent of gibberish in a loud voice, which he called Latin prayers, while at the same time he dashed holy water all over the room and the patient. Then, taking a stout blackthorn stick, he proceeded to thrash the demented person most vigorously, the patient being held firmly all the time by three or four of the friends or neighbours. When the poor victim was half stupefied, and unable even to yell any longer, the operator announced that the devil had gone out of him ; but as the evil spirit was still lurking somewhere about, he must be expelled by force or magic. Whereupon he commenced to whirl the blackthorn stick round in all directions, striking everything animate and inanimate, that lay in his way, as if crazed with fury ; especially beating the doors, by which he said the devil might escape, and he was determined to have a good blow at him ; and all the time, during the process of beating, he kept on re-

citing the gibberish Latin, in a loud strong voice, fortifying his efforts at exorcism by frequent appeals to the whiskey jar.

"A singular case of attempted cure took place lately in Roscommon. A young man named Davy Flynn became suddenly raving mad, or elf-stricken, as the people say, and the great witch-man of the place was sent for one Sunday morning in all haste. He found him bound hand and foot, and foaming at the mouth, while five or six strong men were trying to hold him down; and a great crowd was gathered round the door, who declared that the wretched man was not Davy Flynn at all, the handsome Davy, once the pride of the village for beauty and strength, but a fairy demon who had taken his shape. So the witch-man having examined him, and performed sundry strange rites and invocations, pronounced his opinion that the lunatic was certainly not Davy Flynn, but an old French charger, belonging to a French general, who came to Ireland long ago in the times of the troubles, and to keep the real man alive, who was now in fairyland, the substitute must be well fed with the proper food for a horse.

"On hearing this, the friends ran for a sheaf of oats and crammed the straw down the wretched maniac's throat, after which the exorcist prepared for his mortal combat with the devil, aided of course by the poteen, five kegs of which were brought in for the general strengthening of the company.

"The operator first tied a white apron over his shoulders, then, with a wave of the hand in the form of a cross, he commanded silence. After which, he began the invocation by a volley of gibberish Latin, thundered forth between the occasional draughts of whiskey, while poor Davy had only a bucket of cold water thrown on his head, to which he responded by terrible cries.

"At last the people got tired of the work, and one of them secretly cut the cord of the halter, which held the supposed French charger, while the witch-man was busy over the poteen. Davy, thus finding himself free, sprang at the doctor as if he would tear him to pieces, on which a panic seized the crowd, who rushed from the house, the witch-man following, while the maniac leaped after them with hideous yells and curses. At length the maniac was secured and tied down by a strong rope till the magistrate arrived, who ordered him off to the Roscommon Lunatic Asylum, whither he was at once taken, and where he eventually died, to the great relief of his friends, who really believed that he was the old French charger, and that till the death of the demon-substitute, poor Davy had no chance of being relieved from the bondage he was under in fairy land."

As already stated* there is a valley in Kerry styled Glennagalt, *i.e.* the Glen of the Lunatics, and it is believed that madmen, no matter how far from the locality they live, would, if left to themselves, find their way to the Glen.

"Why this place" (Glennagalt), wrote Dr. C. Smith in 1756, "rather than any other should be frequented by lunatics, nobody can pretend to ascertain any rational cause, and yet no one truth is more firmly credited here by the common people than this impertinent fable." He, however, says that having regard to the appearance of these desolate glens and mountains, none but madmen would dare venture into them.

On the other hand a visitor to this valley in 1845 writes:—"We went to see Glennagalt, or the 'Madman's Glen,' the place, as our guide sagely assured us, to which all the mad people in the world would face if they could get loose. After pursuing for miles our romantic route we came to the highest part of the road and turned a hill which completely shut out Glen Inch; and lo! before us lay a lovely valley, sweeping down through noble hills to Brandon Bay. The peak of the mighty Brandon himself ended one ridge of the boundary, while high, though less majestic mountains formed the other; and this valley so rich and fertile, so gay with cornfields, brown meadows, potato gardens, and the brilliant green of the flax, so varied and so beautiful in the bright mingling of Nature's skilful husbandry, was the 'Madman's Glen.' I felt amazed and bewildered, for I had expected to see a gloomy solitude, with horrid crags and gloomy precipices. Not at all; the finest and richest valley which has greeted my eyes since we entered the Highlands of Kerry is this—smiling, soft, and lovely.

"We took our leave of fair Glennagalt, and assuredly if any aspect of external nature could work such a blessed change, the repose, peace, and plenty of this charming valley would restore the unsettled brain of a poor unfortunate."

The late Professor Eugene O'Curry, in his work on the *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, published in 1873, makes no reference to madness, idiocy, or possession. He refers to a sort of witchcraft under the head of divination, where he gives an instance of a trance produced by magical arts; of the mad rage of the hero, and of how, in the midst of that rage, he was caught, as it were, by the hands and feet, through Druidical incantations.

But few will agree with Dryden, that

> "There is a pleasure in being mad
> Which none but madmen know";

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* Vol. i., p. 357. See also p. 356, Aynia, the Goddess of the insane.

but we should have a fellow-feeling for the insane; for does not the poet state that every body is more or less mad, and the experience of two thousand years has not altered the aphorism of the Roman satirist:—

> "Quisnam igitur sanus? qui non stultus. Quid avarus?
> Stultus et insanus. Quid? si quis non sit avarus;
> Continuo sanus? Minime. . . ."

St. Fillan was a Scottish saint of great reputation, and it is stated that, though the surrounding population is Protestant, yet the country people retain some of the superstitions connected with the wells which bear his name, and there are in Perthshire several dedicated to him still much frequented. These springs "are held powerful in cases of madness, and in instances of very late occurrence lunatics have been left all night bound to the holy stone in confidence that the saint would cure and unloose them before morning." Sir Walter Scott alludes to this practice in *Marmion*:—

> ". . . St. Fillan's blessed well,
> Whose spring can frenzied dreams dispel,
> And the crazed brain restore."

Mr. A. W. Buckland, in *Anthropological Studies*, states that a curious use of St. Fillan's bell for the cure of madness was long employed in Scotland. It would appear that the bell (belonging to the Monastery of Glendochart) was left for generations in the open air on a tombstone, but "at the end of the eighteenth century it suddenly disappeared, and was at last found in the house of an English gentleman in Hertfordshire, who had written in his diary his reasons for taking it away, which are quaint enough. He said that in August, 1790, he rode from Tyndrum to the holy pool of Strathfillan, which, towards the end of the first quarter of the moon, was resorted to by crowds of the neighbouring peasantry, who expected to be cured of their diseases by bathing in it. Amongst those he saw was an unfortunate girl out of her mind who had been brought there for several moons without effect. When mad people were bathed they were thrown in with a rope tied round them, after which they were taken to St. Fillan's Church and placed in a stone trough (probably a coffin) in the open churchyard, and fastened down to a wooden framework and there left for a whole night with a covering of hay over them, and St. Fillan's bell placed over their head. If they were found loose in the morning the saint was supposed to be propitious. 'I was told,' he says, 'that wherever this bell was removed it always returned to a particular spot in the churchyard before morning,' so in order to test the truth of the story he carried it off to England, and

we suppose the distance presented an insuperable barrier to its accustomed nocturnal peregrinations, for it remained in this gentleman's house for seventy years."

Down to the close of the eighteenth century, deeply-rooted belief in the reality of witchcraft was universal, and obtained in Christendom and heathendom alike; whole hecatombs of victims were sacrificed at the altar of a superstition which now only exists, as an established institution, amongst some of the most degraded tribes of Africa. In the old and the new world alike, persecution was based on texts of Scripture which asserted, or rather were alleged to assert, the existence of the power of witchcraft, and contained an imperative command for the extirpation of old, or sometimes young and beautiful women. Witchcraft and supposed demoniacal possession are complementary ideas. The treatment of supposed witches was even more cruel than the treatment of lunatics, and in this persecution all sects of Christians outvied with each other in the grossest cruelties, but now, as the late Professor T. H. Huxley remarks:—"The phraseology of supernaturalism may remain on men's lips, but in practice they are naturalists. The magistrate who listens with devout attention to the precept, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,' on Sunday; on Monday dismisses, as intrinsically absurd, a charge of bewitching a cow brought against some old woman; the superintendent of a lunatic asylum who substituted exorcism for rational modes of treatment would have but a short tenure of office."

The Act against witchcraft for the United Kingdom was only repealed in the year 1736, and its cancelling was regarded by many religious people with serious misgivings. John Wesley, in 1768, enters in his journal that "the giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible."* If the value of the Bible really

* Having quoted from Wesley's belief in Witchcraft, it may be as well to give the context, *i.e.* his confession, in full. He writes:—

"It is true that the English in general, and indeed most of the men in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it, and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it.

"I owe them no such service. I take knowledge these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised, and with such insolence spread throughout the nation, in direct opposition, not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and the best of men in all ages and nations.

"They well know, whether Christians know it or not, that the giving up witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible. And they know, on the other hand, that if but one account of the intercourse of men with separate spirits be admitted, their whole castle in the air—deism, atheism, materialism—falls to the ground. I know no reason, therefore, why we should suffer even this weapon to be wrested out of our hands. Indeed, there are numerous arguments besides which abundantly confute their vain imaginations; but we need not be hooted out of one; neither reason nor religion requires this."

depended, in any degree, on belief in witchcraft and its concomitant errors, it would, perhaps, in that unlikely case, be better to give up the Bible. Sir T. Browne believed in witches, and helped to swear away the lives of some, as an "expert."* Yet he wrote a very learned work on "*Vulgar Errors*," and a very learned and logical one, too!

In the year 1578, Sir William Drury, Lord Deputy of Ireland, when in Kilkenny, ordered thirty-six criminals to be executed, of whom "two were witches and condemned by the law of nature, for there was no positive law against witchcraft in those days." Sir Richard Cox, who mentions this occurrence, had been Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and it would appear that he really believed that these two unfortunate persons who were executed were actually guilty of witchcraft.

The benefit which modern education has conferred, in freeing the majority of the people from the bondage of old ideas, can only be properly appreciated when the fatal consequences of beliefs in ancient superstitions in Ireland are brought to the light of day. Notwithstanding the sympathy which the fate of so numerous an array of unfortunate victims is calculated to excite, it must not be forgotten that, although the vast majority were innocent of any offence against the law of the land, yet that some of these persons were in the habit of boasting of their supposed art in order the more readily to extract from their dupes whatever they desired, and in a few instances they were vendors of poison, furnishing their customers with the means of gratifying either their avarice or their revenge.

Ireland has had a liberal quota of troubles, but very few proceeded from witch-finding and witch-burning on a large scale. There have been but slight innovations in the rites of sorcery, the gradual evolution from paganism to modern Christianity having caused but little change. As evidence of this it will be sufficient to quote the ceremonies which Lady Alice Kyteler of Kilkenny, her son William, and their accomplices, were alleged to have employed about the year 1500.

Lady Alice Kyteler was accused of sweeping the dust of the street to the threshold of her son, muttering this charm the while:—

> "To the house of William, my son,
> Hie all the wealth of Kilkenny town."

Lady Alice and her accomplices were also accused of renouncing the Christian faith during certain periods, in which time they would not attend Mass, say a prayer, or discharge any religious

* We nowadays appreciate at their true value experts and their evidence, given, in most cases, as it is wanted—and paid for accordingly.

function. They were accused of killing certain animals, and of flinging the dissevered portions about at cross-roads, as an offering or sacrifice to a devil of very low degree. They were accused of mimicking the ceremony of excommunication and employing it against sundry parties to whom they bore ill-will. They were accused of sacrificing to demons the intestines of cocks, mingled with worms, baleful herbs, nails, the hair of dead men, and the clothes and portions of the bodies of unbaptized children, and of having boiled these and other ingredients in the skull of an executed criminal. They had also compounded magic powders and magic candles from hellish mixtures, to excite love in some and procure lingering death in others.

Lady Alice, especially, had held conferences with the beforementioned devil of low degree, when he appeared to her in the shapes of a black cat, a black dog, and a black man. She also had sacrificed to him at a certain stone bridge, nine red cocks, and nine peacocks' eyes; and on more than one occasion she had anointed a coulter, and performed long ærial journeys on it. Lady Alice very wisely managed to escape to England; her son William, a man of influence, submitted to imprisonment; but one of her alleged accomplices, poor Petronella, was burnt, after having been flogged six times; it is probable that she confessed to being present at the magic rites, to escape a repetition of fresh torture.

The trial of eight women for witchcraft occurred so late as the year 1711, at Carrickfergus. These women were accused, by a young girl of eighteen years of age, of having attempted her life by means of hellish spells. One judge gave it as his opinion, "that the jury could not bring them in guilty upon the sole testimony of the afflicted person's visionary images"; but from this the other judge dissented, and thought "the jury might, from the evidence, bring them in guilty," which they promptly did.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century one of these witches, or "fairy women," lived near Red Hills, in Kildare. According to the Rev. John O'Hanlon, "her reputation as a possessor of supernatural knowledge and divination drew crowds of distant visitors to her daily, and from the most remote parts of Ireland. In various instances they were furnished with a bottle containing some supposed curative liquid, and directed to return homewards without falling asleep on their journey. This bottle was filled with water, darkly coloured by a decoction of herbs, gathered with certain incantations near a rath that afforded the customary *materia medica* of fairy doctors for the cure of a special disease, on which consultation was required. The most accomplished and skilful member of the medical faculty

seldom received a more remunerative fee for his services on behalf of a patient, than the wise woman of the Red Hills pocketed from her credulous dupes. At one time a young woman had been directed to return with the magic draught to her sick relative's house, she was especially cautioned to keep her eyes open along the way; overcome with fatigue, however, and probably feverish with anxiety and excitement, the young person was obliged to rest by the roadside. Wearied nature soon began to claim her usual requirement of 'balmy sleep.' No sooner had the girl dozed off into dreamy unconsciousness, than one of the ugliest beings imagination had ever created appeared to her disordered fancies; and with wrinkled visage, the spectre seemed ready to clutch her in his extended arms. With a loud scream she bounded to her feet, and through terror would doubtless have left the curative potion behind, had she not already taken the precaution of securing it within her bosom. The rude monitor of her obligation was supposed to have been a friend among the sheeogues. I knew the person thus supposed to have been warned, and who, in old age, related this adventure. After the death of Moll Anthony her daughter followed the same profession, but never enjoyed a like celebrity."

Towards the commencement of the nineteenth century the Rev. John O'Hanlon had also the opportunity of witnessing the mysterious quackery practised by a noted *sheeogue* or "fairy doctor," known as "Paddy the Dash," and sometimes as "Paddy the Cow Doctor." He was believed to hold friendly intercourse with the fairies, as his cabin adjoined one of their raths. He received his cognomen of "The Dash," from a peculiar stammering or defect in articulation, that obliged him to jerk out words at irregular intervals, accompanied by violent gesticulations. Paddy's process of treatment was considered desirable in the case of an old woman, who had fallen into decline, and some of Paddy's young friends were, by especial favour, admitted to the patient's chamber to observe operations. "We were but 'wee-bit bodies,' at the time, and have only an indistinct recollection of Paddy drawing out of his *cota more* pocket a large black bottle, with two or three packages of brown paper, containing dried herbs and a bunch of *boughelawns* or *boliauns*, on which the fairies are said to ride occasionally through the air. The herbs and tops of the *boughelawns* were put in a porringer filled with water, that had been left simmering on the kitchen fire; afterwards followed some unaccountable flourishes over the sick woman, then some strokes on her back and forehead with three shakes. . . . Holy water had, I think, been used during this sort of necromancy, and sprinkled on the sick person. The patient's face, hands, and feet were finally bathed with the warm mixture contained in a porringer."

Formerly every district, almost every village, had some sybilline like dealer in charms—some old hag, who half believed in the credulity she excited. Children were brought to her to bathe their eyes with concoctions, and to fasten slips of witch-hazel round their necks, so that the evil eye could not rest on them. Maidens purchased the dew she gathered on May morning, in preference to any they could collect themselves.

> "The fair maid who, the first of May,
> Goes to the field at break of day,
> And washes in dew from the hawthorn tree,
> Will ever after handsome be."

Young women about to become mothers for the first time, would apply for charms to keep the fairies away for the nine days after the birth of the infant; and people going on journeys bought charms against the powers of the air, of the water, of the earth, and of the fire until their return home.

The stock in trade of a witch, or wise woman, who pursued her calling at the commencement of the nineteenth century (on the lines practised by "herb doctors" or "medicine men," a class of quacks who, however, in most cases really believe in the efficacy of their charms) may be thus described—Over her cabin door a horse-shoe is nailed for luck. Beneath the salt-box is a bottle of holy water to keep the place purified and to ward off crickets—for crickets are the supposed harbingers of bad luck, and one should never kill them as their comrades will avenge their death by eating the woollen clothes.* A bunch of fairy flax lies on the top of the salt-box; sown into the folds of the wise woman's scapular is a four-leaved shamrock, an invaluable specific for rendering fairies visible to the human eye. Over the door, over the beds, over the cattle in the byre hang branches of withered yew, and when the cows calve the wise woman ties a red woollen thread about their tails to protect them from being either overlooked or "elfshot" by the fairies, who, as we have seen, possess a peculiar power over females, of every species, during the period of parturition.

In the garden grow house-leeks—a specific for sore eyes—tansy, rosenoble, Solomon's Seal, bugloss, bogbane, and numerous other herbs, each for some medicinal purpose, and various charms

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* As early as possible on the morning of the feast of St. Fintan (3rd January) housekeepers appear to have been absolved from this prohibition, and were in the habit of performing a very practical exorcism against crickets. This consisted in pouring boiling water into the holes and crevices frequented by them, whilst repeating the couplet—

> "If you have come for luck, stay;
> If not, I warn you away!"

for toothache, headache, for removing warts and taking motes out of the eye. Many condiments are kept in stock. Seal oil for sprains and rheumatism, the tongue of a fox for a poultice to extract thorns, needles, &c., dandelion for liver complaints, comfrey as a styptic, samphire boiled in milk for heartburn; its leaves are also employed in urinary diseases. This use is not peculiar to Irish "physicians," for we find mention of it in many ancient writers. Bryony, with its scarlet berries, sometimes mistaken for red currants, produces death in a most painful form. There was also another plant kept in stock whose English name sufficiently indicates its deleterious qualities :—

> "Fair to the sight, but by the smell
> Unprized, the henbane's straw-ting'd bell
> With danger pregnant."

Its roots are liable to be mistaken for parsnips, and are eaten with fatal results. On breaking in two the stalk of the common crowfoot, milky juice will be observed to hang on the upper part of the stem. If this be dropped on a wart by the wise woman, the wart will fall off. Rags or wool steeped in nettle juice and put up the nostrils stay bleeding at the nose, where all other remedies have failed, even including the application of the key of the front door to the nape of the neck. (The cold of the iron generally effecting a cure.) A "wise woman" would also have belladonna, heartsease, ground ivy, or mountain sage for palpitations or for coughs, bog bark or parsley boiled in milk for gravel, nettles with ginger, for wind in the stomach, horehound as an expectorant, mullein as a cough mixture, ivy leaves for a scald head, and furze tops, broom and carageen moss combined for a cough mixture; so there was within easy reach a good pharmacopœia.

One need not laugh at this pharmacopœia, for some herbs and some of the treatment would really have had the effect desired, and until a comparatively recent period the system of medicine was a vast farrago of empirical absurdities. The favourite Court physician to three kings, James I., Charles I., and Charles II., administered fearful abominations. He prescribed pulverised human bones in great quantity; his celebrated "gout powder" contained raspings from a human skull, but his sweetest composition was "balsalm of bats," into which entered bats, adders, sucking-whelps, earth worms, hog's grease, the marrow of a stag, and the thigh bone of an ox.

It must be honestly admitted that many of these old medical superstitions and medical treatments before enumerated have some justification, though not always that advanced by their practitioners. It is an undoubted fact that the mind exercises

great influence on the body. Thus if an invalid of a superstitious temperament carries about on the person what he or she considers a talisman, belief in the charm reacts in a greater or less degree on the bodily condition of the patient. "Oftentimes, in truth, the only merit of a plant lay in the charm formula attached to it, the due utterance of which ensured relief to the patient. Originally there can be no doubt that such verbal forms were prayers, 'since dwindled into mystic sentences.'"

Parsons, at any rate, cannot certainly afford to sneer at such so-called medical treatment, for a philanthropic divine anathematised that greatest of all modern discoveries, chloroform, on its first introduction as "a decoy of Satan, apparently offering itself to bless women," and alleging that its use would "harden society and rob God of the deep earnest cries which arise in time of trouble for help." A witty surgeon answered the clerical fool according to his folly, and retorted by quoting his own Scripture against him to prove that the Almighty Himself was the first to set the example of performing an operation under anæsthesia, when he cast Adam into a deep sleep before removing his rib. Again, when the discovery of inoculation was brought from Constantinople to England, in the commencement of the eighteenth century, its introduction was strenuously resisted by the clergy. A similar opposition was exhibited when Jenner introduced vaccination. A hundred years ago it was almost an exception to see a face unpitted by small-pox; now it is the exception to see one so marked. Thus, though not without bitter resistance on the part of the clergy, people began to think for themselves, and came to understand that pestilences were not punishments inflicted by the Almighty for religious shortcomings, but the natural consequences of neglect, filth, and wretchedness.

Watercress, boiled with whiskey and sugar, is taken as a cure for bronchitis. Pounded flag-root is used for dressing cuts and wounds. Crowfoot, pounded up with butter, is used for erysipelas.

In the irritating cutaneous eruption, which like a girdle gradually encircles half the body (hence its English designation, *shingles*), the country-people believe that if the rash meets, and thus forms a complete girdle, the patient will die. A common cure for the disease is the blood of a black cat smeared on the parts affected.

"Love potions" are even now frequently given; they are compounded by a "wise woman," but must be administered to the man by the woman who wishes to inspire the tender passion. The giving of a love potion is considered a dreadful act, as the result is always dangerous and often fatal to the recipient.

Noxious beasts or mad dogs can do one no harm provided a

bit of columbine provided by a "wise woman" be carried about the person, or the skin be rubbed with it. If another plant, the Shepherd's Purse, is hung under the necks of sheep they become invisible to dogs. This herb possesses, therefore, the same properties as the fern (*Filex minor longifolia*), which made human beings invisible. Threlkeld adverts to this subject when he says:—"A great splutter has been made about fern seed, and several sauntering stories feigned concerning its collection on St. John's Eve, or the summer solstice, which are mere trumpery." But nevertheless the country people still believe that the roots of bracken and the roots of lilies gathered on St. John's Eve, if cut after certain incantations, will disclose to a young woman her true lover's name, and if fern seed be carried on the person that those so carrying it become invisible.

Ben Jonson alludes to this superstition:—

> "I had
> No medicine, sir, to go invisible
> No fern seed in my pocket";

as does also Shakspeare in *1 Henry IV.*:—

> "*Gadshill.* . . . We have the receipt of fern seed, we walk invisible.
> *Chamberlain.* Nay, by my faith, I think you are more beholding to the night than to fern seed for your walking invisible."

Depression of spirits, called in Irish "sinking of the heart," is cured in the following manner:—The "fairy" or "herb doctor" holds a cup of meal, of which a certain quantity is set aside for the purpose, close to the patient, saying in Irish—"Ease to the heart, ease to the heart," and muttering an invocation. This is done three times on three separate occasions, and each time the meal in the cup is cast into the fire. When the last of the three performances is terminated a cake is made of the flour that is over, the patient sitting by, taking care that no animal or human being passes between him and the fire until it is baked. It is then eaten with nine sprigs of watercress, and if any be left it must be thrown into the fire.

According to John Knott, M.D., "cases of acute catarrh of the lining membrane of the stomach are, necessarily, fairly common among the potato-fed peasantry. This condition is accompanied by pain and tenderness at the 'pit of the stomach,' and when scrutinised by the specially 'knowledgeable elder' of the locality is diagnosticated with the announcement that the 'spool of the breast is down.' The cure is carried out by a series of three Monday-Thursday operations, in each of which the painful part is '*dry-cupped*.' This is done by making a small piece of dough, in which a piece of candle or a couple of lucifer

matches may be comfortably anchored, and then lighted. A large drinking-glass (tumbler) is then inverted on the part, closely applied to the skin, and the rapid exhaustion of the air proves very effective indeed in production of a vacuum, and consequent 'cupping.' The cupping-glass is solemnly left in position for a quarter of an hour, and the patient is strictly enjoined to maintain the horizontal position for an hour after its removal. The relief obtained is very obvious."

Quite recently a Protestant clergyman who suffered from some obscure affection of the palate was persuaded to consult a "knowledgeable elder," who, however, did not acknowledge him as his spiritual adviser. After a careful and lengthened examination the quack stated that his patient's "palate was down," and to draw it back in position suspended the sufferer for a short time by the hair of his head. He then pronounced that the palate had been replaced. Strange to narrate, the gentleman declared that he had been greatly relieved by the process.

It is still a very prevalent idea that toothache is caused by a little worm, like a diminutive eel, which gnaws a hole in the tooth.

A terrible "cure" recently practised in the county Sligo is as follows:—Members of certain families are noted for their healing powers, as also for the healing property of their blood. The suffering person goes to the "wise man" or "wise woman" with a gift; if it is not acceptable, the postulant is told what must be brought. The charlatan then opens a vein, and allows a certain quantity of his or her blood to drop on the sore; if the ailment is internal, the blood must be swallowed; in either case certain rhymes and incantations are muttered whilst the ceremony is being gone through.

Another very similar case occurred in the county Tipperary. It is thus recounted by a physician now residing in Sligo:—"I heard of the following remedy—and I know the anecdote to be authentic—for the cure of 'St. Anthony's Fire' (erysipelas or nettle-rash). The blood of any member of a family called 'Cahill,' applied to the part affected, was supposed to be a specific, and the lady who told me the story knew the woman Cahill, who used to 'bark her shin' with a fir-stick, and apply the blood with her finger to the patient's skin. The old woman died only a few years ago."

For inflammation or disease of the eyes, or for disorders of the stomach, Pagani vero oculorum morbo affecti urinâ quâ oculos lavare solent, vel eandem, ut alii morbos sanent, bis quotidie potana. Quæ quidem mihi experto bene cognita sunt. Nempe medicus in hac regione versus eos, qui sibi ita male consuluerunt saepe refecerat. Nec non et urinam vulneribus et

plagis solent infundere quibus emplastram pecudam stercore commixtum imponunt.

It was recommended, by the oracle of Butos, to Pheron, son of Sesostris, as a cure for the restoration of his sight; the anecdote is most amusingly recounted by Herodotus, and is well worthy of perusal, as it is written in quite a Rabelaisian vein of humour.* That of goats, as well as cows, was employed by other nations (Herodotus, *Melpomene*, clxxxvii.). A labourer in the employment of the writer injured the back of his hand, and a cancerous growth developed. This was excised, and the wound healed. Congratulated on the recovery the workman replied: "It was no thanks to the surgeon, quia de die in diem micturire in vulnus solibam." In non nullis Hibernicis MSS. de medicinâ usum internum humani et canini quoque excrementi ut remedium morbis quibus dam proscriptum invenimus.

Cow-dung applied as a specific for skin disease, cuts, wounds, &c., has frequently come under notice. A physician in Sligo writes:—"The case in which I saw cow-dung used was one of, I think, eczema or erysipelas of the face, I forget which. It occurred in the county Tyrone. A stout, well-to-do farmer, appeared with his face partly washed, clean about the nose and eyes, but crusted round the ears and forehead with a black, foul looking substance, which he said was cow-dung the neighbours had applied as a cure. He had undergone the treatment for some days, and did not smell exactly like a rose. In time the crusts were removed, and a lotion healed the whole thing up in a few days."

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* Σεσώστριος δὲ τελευτήσαντος, ἐκδέξασθαι ἔλεγον τὴν βασιληΐην τὸν παῖδα αὐτοῦ Φερῶν· τὸν ἀποδέξασθαι μὲν οὐδεμίαν στρατηΐην, συνενειχθῆναι δὲ οἱ τυφλὸν γενέσθαι διὰ τοιόνδε πρῆγμα· τοῦ ποταμοῦ κατελθόντος μέγιστα δὴ τότε ἐπ' ὀκτωκαίδεκα πήχεας, ὡς ὑπερέβαλε τὰς ἀρούρας, πνεύματος ἐμπεσόντος, κυματίης ὁ ποταμὸς ἐγένετο· τὸν δὲ βασιλέα λέγουσι τοῦτον ἀτασθαλίῃ χρησάμενον, λαβόντα αἰχμὴν βαλέειν ἐς μέσας τὰς δίνας τοῦ ποταμοῦ· μετὰ δὲ, αὐτίκα καμόντα αὐτὸν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τυφλωθῆναι· δέκα μὲν δὴ ἔτεα εἶναί μιν τυφλόν· ἑνδεκάτῳ δὲ ἔτεϊ ἀπικέσθαι οἱ μαντήϊον ἐκ Βουτοῦς πόλιος, ὡς "ἐξήκει τέ οἱ ὁ χρόνος τῆς ζημίης, καὶ ἀναβλέψει, γυναικὸς οὔρῳ νιψάμενος τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἥτις παρὰ τὸν ἑωυτῆς ἄνδρα μοῦνον πεφοίτηκε, ἄλλων ἀνδρῶν ἐοῦσα ἄπειρος·" καὶ τὸν πρώτης τῆς ἑωυτοῦ γυναικὸς πειρᾶσθαι· μετὰ δὲ, ὡς οὐκ ἀνέβλεπε, ἐπεξῆς πασέων πειρᾶσθαι· ἀναβλέψαντα δὲ συναγαγεῖν τὰς γυναῖκας τῶν ἐπειρήθη, πλὴν ἡ τῆς τῷ οὔρῳ νιψάμενος ἀνέβλεψε, ἐς μίαν πόλιν ἡ νῦν καλέεται Ἐρυθρὴ βῶλος· ἐς ταύτην συναλίσαντα, ὑποπρῆσαι πάσας σὺν αὐτῇ τῇ πόλι· τῆς δὲ νιψάμενος τῷ οὔρῳ ἀνέβλεψε, ταύτην δὲ εἶχε αὐτὸς γυναῖκα. ἀναθήματα δὲ, ἀποφυγὼν τὴν πάθην τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν, ἄλλα τε ἀνὰ τὰ ἱρὰ πάντα τὰ λόγιμα ἀνέθηκε, καὶ, τοῦ γε λόγον μάλιστα αξιόν ἐστι ἔχειν, ἐς τοῦ Ἡλίου τὸ ἱρὸν ἀξιοθέητα ἀνέθηκε ἔργα ὀβελοὺς δύο λιθίνους, ἐξ ἑνὸς ἐόντα ἑκάτερον λίθου, μῆκος μὲν ἑκάτερον πηχέων ἑκατὸν εὖρος δὲ ὀκτὼ πηχέων.

The County Surgeon of Sligo states that a very bad case—a man whose arm was laid open from wrist to elbow by a blow from a hedge knife—was brought into the infirmary for treatment. Examination showed that the entire cut had been filled with cow-dung. The man's neighbours had advised this very strange application, which, however, it is needless to say, protracted his recovery.

The Rev. John Wesley, M.A., in his great medical work entitled *Primitive Physick*, and sold at all his "Preaching-Houses" (7th edition, 1776), recommends the following as a cure for "a windy Rupture" in children:—"Warm Cow-Dung well. Spread it thick on leather, strewing some cummin-seeds on it, and apply it hot. It commonly cures a child (keeping his bed) in two days." A cure for cancer (the *opprobrium medicorum*) in the breast (according to the same authority) is to "apply goose dung and celandine, beat well together, and spread on a fine rag, it will both cleanse and heal the sore." For films on the eye, the sufferer should "take the white part of hen's dung, carefully dried, with an equal quantity of burnt alum, and double-refined sugar, sift these, and blow a little into the eye at going to bed."

In a communication to the writer, John Knott, M.D., an authority on medical folklore, remarks that, "one of the most prevalent of the popular surgical notions among the peasantry apparently is that the organ of vision, when badly injured by the lodgment of dust, fragments of stone, &c., must be 'taken out of the head,' washed, and replaced before its functions can be perfectly restored. The brilliant appearance of the tissues of the eye—of glassy structure in front and porcellaneous over the rest of surface—probably gave origin to this notion. China and glass are, of course, the articles which are washed everywhere. It requires, as all will agree, a very *clever* doctor to take the eye out of the head, lay it on a plate, brush and wash it, wipe it with a silk handkerchief, and put it in its place again—properly. An ordinary 'botch' would damage the sight, 'or put it in crooked'; which was often done, and produced many a permanent squint.

"It is well known that in many of the more remote districts of Ireland, even up to the present day, the dung of animals is often applied as a poultice to an ulcerated or abraded surface. That of cows and of pigs is most frequently chosen.

"The symptomatic conditions of jaundice are, of course, very obvious, and, necessarily, very repulsive to the uneducated eye. Its very varying causes, and correspondingly varying degree of obstinacy, must have suggested various modes of treatment; but the leading characteristic of most would appear to be their phenomenal degree of loathsomeness. Patients in this condition

have been made to drink a tumbler-full of their own urine in the morning, fasting, for nine days in succession. Another specific was to obtain '*nine couples of lice*,' from the person of the patient, if possible; boil them in a porringer with some sour butter-milk, and get the sufferer to swallow the whole—with care. Nevertheless, it must be noted, that such forms of medication were by no means so monstrously absurd as they may at first sight appear to be, as the extreme nausea which was necessarily produced by their means had a decidedly salutary effect on the circulation in the liver, and thereby on the excretion of bile.

"The urine of the cow has been dignified by the application of the epithet of 'all-flower water.' The reason is obvious: the animal eats all the flowers, as well as other herbs of the field, and the evacuated secretion of the kidneys contains their superfluous juice.

"Some of the Irish peasantry—at least as lately as twenty-five years ago—used to dose their children, in all their bodily ailments, with copious draughts of 'all-flower water,' taken fresh from the source. The reason for its use was highly logical. The Creator had undoubtedly, in his mercy, placed the materials for the relief of all human ailments in the herbs of the field; but the sinfulness and negligence of man have hitherto prevented him from investigating those remedies individually. But 'all-flower water' contains the essence of all herbs; therefore, &c.—Q. E. D."

Although there is apparently not the remotest connection between extreme heat and hydrophobia, yet popular belief rules otherwise, and associates it, in some manner, with the dog days. The malady is rare in all hot climates, and in the European area the months in which hydrophobia is most prevalent are not July and August, but April, November, and December.

People who showed symptoms of hydrophobia were formerly smothered between two feather beds, a merciful way of putting an end to their sufferings. However, some country people believe that madness may be cured by administering to the afflicted person, "three substances not procured by human means, and not made by the hands of man. These are honey, milk, and salt; and they are to be given him to drink, before sunrise, in a sea-shell. Madness and the falling sickness are both considered hereditary, and caused by demoniacal possession." Various plants were, in days gone by, used for the bites of mad dogs, and to cure hydrophobia. Angelica, madworts, and several forms of lichens were favourite remedies. The root of balaustium, with storax, cypress-nuts, soot, olive-oil, and wine was the receipt, according to Bonaventura, of Cardinal Richelieu.

Among other popular remedies were beetroot, box leaves, cabbage, cucumbers, black currants, digitalis, and euphorbia. A family named MacGowan, in the county Cavan, claims to have a cure for hydrophobia. An inquiry was instituted by the Irish Local Government Board, and the subject was also brought before Parliament, by the member for North Leitrim, P. A. M'Hugh.

Lady Wilde, in *Ancient Cures, Charms, and Usages of Ireland*, gives the legend relating to the origin of the discovery of this cure. Nearly two centuries ago two brothers named MacGowan, "living at opposite sides of the lake, used frequently to cross over in their boat to visit each other. One day a strange dog came swimming towards them, and was lifted into the boat, but he instantly bit one of the brothers severely, and showed all the signs of decided madness. The young man gave himself up for lost, and wandered about the fields all night, till at last, overcome by fatigue, he lay down in his own garden and fell asleep. Then and there a dream came to him, that under his head grew a herb that would cure him, if prepared in a certain way revealed to him as in a vision. On awakening, he at once sought for the herb, and having found it, to his great joy, set about the preparations for the potion exactly as it had been shown to him in the dream. The result was his perfect restoration from the fatal disease; and the strange story having got abroad, the MacGowans became famous throughout the country for the cure of hydrophobia, large sums being paid to them for the exercise of their skill and knowledge."*

Dr. Knott states that a fellow-student of his attended a case

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* "Thus they amassed a deal of money, for the wonderful herb seldom failed to cure the terrible malady; but no amount of money could tempt the brothers to reveal the name of the herb or the mode of preparation. This great secret remains, therefore, a mystery to this day, known only to the head of the MacGowans, who preserves the tradition, and will transmit it only to his eldest son. But to ensure a perfect cure, certain rules and orders must be rigidly observed. First, the patient must be brought under care within nine days after the attack, before the hydrophobia has become virulent; secondly, he must not cross water during the progress of the cure.

"Quite recently a curious case happened, which tested the power of the MacGowans, and excited the greatest interest throughout the country.

"A pet cat belonging to a farmer's family suddenly showed signs of savage ferocity, and flew at everyone, inflicting severe bites. Six of the children were laid up, and even the farmer himself was attacked before the animal could be killed. Evidently the beast was mad, and, in terror of the consequences, the family sent an urgent request to the MacGowans to come and help them.

"Three brothers of the name were living at the time, and the eldest agreed to go and try the cure if fifty shillings were paid to him before starting. This was a large sum for the farmer to give; but as six of the children were lying half dead from fright, he consented, and paid the money.

"MacGowan at once set forth on his mission of mystic healing, bringing with him two kegs of liquid, each containing about five gallons, also a large

of hydrophobia which had been treated after the bite by the MacGowans. The case, a genuine one, ended fatally, of course.

Another charm, as a protective against hydrophobia, in the case of a person bitten by a dog, is to take a few hairs from its tail, and place them upon the wound in a poultice, or swallow them. This practice is most unmistakably the origin of the toper's advice to any one suffering from headache in the morning from imbibing too much alcohol the night before :—

"Take a hair of the dog that bit you."

"If the ingestion of a single hair of the domestic cat is not followed by its evacuation *per vias naturales*, the unhappy subject of the accident pines slowly away, and surely dies as a direct consequence. If the hair becomes deposited on the liver, the symptoms are said to be more rapidly progressive. It is said that a very skilful doctor can sometimes diagnosticate the source of the complaint from the complexion of the patient. It will then be no matter of surprise that so skilful a practitioner always knows the exact spot at which he must make an opening which at once reveals the mischievous hair to the eye. It need hardly be added that in so skilful hands the patient always survives the operation, and rapidly recovers from the progressive emaciation which had been hurrying him to his grave."

Formerly hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum*) was employed by country "medicine men" as a cure for external and internal cancer. Strange to say, cynoglossum powder has recently been advertised in the newspapers as a "new cancer cure." John Knott, M.D., drew attention to the resuscitation of the old recipe as

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stock of garlic and hazel-nuts. The fluid was of a green colour, and very nauseous to the taste. The people said it was made of the Atherlus (ground-ivy), which has singular mystic properties ; but MacGowan kept strict silence on the subject, and no one dared to ask him a question as to the nature of the ingredients.

"The family, meanwhile, were ordered to provide two stone of barley meal and three pounds of butter, and with these cakes were to be made, moistened with the fluid from the keg, of which also the patients were to drink copiously ; and during the three days appointed for the cure they were to have no other sustenance save the barley cakes and the green fluid.

"If, at the end of that time, the cure was not effected, then the patients would surely die: their only chance was over, nothing more could be done to help them. Happily, however, the cure was quite successful. The children were all restored, and, consequently, the fame of the MacGowans increased, and no end of presents and money were sent to them in addition to the sum paid down.

"Still the head of the race resisted all entreaties to reveal the name of the herb or the secret of the green fluid, and to this day no man nor mortal, nor even the priest himself, has ever obtained a knowledge of the mystery, save only the eldest son of the eldest son in each successive generation of the MacGowan family."—(Pages 44–46).

a "new cure" in the *Medical Press* (7th Nov., 1900), and says: "I have not seen the original advertisement, but having regard to the fact that the only authority cited is that of a manuscript found in the monastery of Mount Athos, I take it that the apostles of this new remedy look upon its introduction to the public as an absolute novelty. The soundness of the foundation upon which this item of doctrine is built can easily be tested by a cursory glance at the contents of our early herbals, the materials of which are, perhaps, too systematically neglected by scientific practitioners in these days of advanced organic chemistry and bacteriological pathology."

Dr. Knott then traces the botanical and therapeutical history of the hound's-tongue from its employment by Dioscorides, the household physician of Antony and Cleopatra, down to the present day:—"Its efficiency as a local dressing of *all* types of *foul ulcers* was universally taught and recognized. Cancerous ulcers are necessarily included in its category. Personally, the present writer (Dr. Knott), as an enthusiastic lover of his profession, is extremely glad to greet every attempt to prove the desirability of procuring the resurrection of any of the old herbal remedies. He is thoroughly convinced that too many valuable items among them have been long forgotten or ignored. And although his devotion to truth impels him to show that the 'cancer cure,' in question, is anything rather than '*new*,' he will be none the less pleased to learn that experiment has demonstrated that its efficacy may yet be proved *true*."

Not many years ago, in a remote village, in the county Cork, there died an aged woman named O'Sullivan, who is stated to have possessed the secret of a vegetable cure for both internal and external cancer, but the secret died with her. There are at present some herb-doctors in Ireland who still claim to possess a cure for this disease in its external form; one of the best known resides in the county Sligo, and should be prosecuted by the Crown. Some dreadful cases, easily amenable to modern surgery, and ignorantly treated by him, leaving hideous deformities, have come under notice. He uses arsenic and chloride of zinc, both violent caustics. The country people still have themselves bled by him for diseases in general, often for weakness, which, of course, only increases the debility from which they are suffering.

Consumption was treated in olden days by vegetable decoctions, in which mullein and carrageen moss were predominant components, but the secret of the preparation is also lost. Snails are still esteemed good for chronic coughs and for consumption. Half a dozen boiled in a quart of barley water and then strained should be administered in every liquid taken by the invalid.

Pounded or incinerated snail-shells are also administered as a cure for consumption. "They may be of use," writes a physician, "especially when incinerated, supplying the system with the salts of lime, potash, and magnesium—and thereby repairing the waste of the tissues in chronic disease, such as consumption, comparing favourably with the present method adopted in Germany, of giving sickly children finely powdered egg-shells to harden their bones."

In the manual of *Primitive Physick* by John Wesley, M.A., already quoted, he recommends, as a cure for consumption, "In the last stage suck a healthy woman daily. Tried by my father."

Spiders are very much used in the cure of certain ailments. Tied in a small bag and suspended round the neck, they ward off attacks of fever and of ague; a black spider eaten every morning is a cure for consumption; another cure is to wrap a living spider in its own web, place it in a lump of butter and swallow it whilst yet alive. It is believed by the country people that jaundice is produced by yellow flies, or fly-like grubs, that introduce themselves into the body, and that the introduction of spiders and their eggs is a very efficient antidote.

According to Lady Wilde, two remedies employed by the country people for deafness are as follows:—"Take the cowslip, roots, blossom and leaves, clean them well, then bruise and press them in a linen cloth, add honey to the juice thus pressed out, put it in a bottle, and pour a few drops into the nostrils and ears of the patient, he lying on his back. Then, after some time, turn him on his face, till the water pours out, carrying away whatever obstructives lay on the brain. This must be repeated for three days." The other remedy is to "fold up two eels in a cabbage leaf, place them on the fire till they are soft, then press out the juice and drop it into the ear."

Lady Wilde also quotes the following recipes from an old Irish MS. of about the year 1450, in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy as certain cures for epilepsy:—

"'Put salt and white snails into a vessel for three nights, add 7 lbs. woodbine leaves, and mix them to a paste; a poultice of this applied for nine days will cure.

"'Or, the heart of a crow, beaten up with his blood, and drank for nine days, will relieve the disease.

"'Or, a plaster made of mandragore and ground-ivy, boiled and laid upon the head. If the patient sleeps he will do well, and if not, he will not.

"'Or, a band of the fresh skin of a wolf worn round the body as a girdle, and as long as the patient wears it he will be free from the falling sickness.

"'Or, pour wine upon a pound of hemlock, fresh gathered, and let it be drank while the person is in the fit.

"'Or, three hairs of a milk-white greyhound to be tied up and worn on the neck as an amulet. This keeps the fit away.'

"The scribe who copied these receipts says of himself:—'I am Conlan Mac Liagh, son of the doctor, and in the Monastery of Tuam I am this 14th day of the moon's age, and a thousand years four hundred years, and nine years of age of the Lord.'"

Lady Wilde also gives other modes of treatment for epilepsy, still practised by the country people; as follows:—

"No one should touch the person in the fit, only the man who works the charm. He first takes a bundle of unbleached linen yarn, and ties it round the patient, then cuts his hair, and the finger and toe nails; these clippings he gathers together and burns with the linen yarn. The ashes are then divided into two parts, after which the patient is laid flat on the earth and two holes are made, one at his head the other at his feet; into these are poured the divided ashes, while a harrow-pin is placed over all. So they leave him for a day and a night. And thus the falling sickness is buried for ever in that spot, never to rise up again while the ashes and the iron remain untouched."

"'By the wood of the Cross, by the Man that overcame death, be thou healed.' These words are to be said in the left ear while the fit is on the patient, and he is to be signed three times with the sign of the Cross, in the name of God and the blessed Lord, when by virtue of the charm he will be cured."

"Burn the patient with a red-hot church key along the head, and he will be cured. Should he fall in the fit, put the juice of absinthe, or fennel juice, or sage juice into his mouth, and he will get well at once."

"The sickness is best cured by the hand of a priest. But it is said that if on the first attack the person's shirt be taken off and thrown into the fire and burned, his hair cropped, and his nails pared, and the hair and the parings buried, together with a young cock put down into the grave alive, then he will never have another attack while he lives."

In the county Sligo, and presumably elsewhere, it was formerly believed that a certain cure for epilepsy consisted of the first verse of the Gospel of St. John, written on a small slip of paper, sewed up in a piece of cloth, and worn suspended from the neck of the afflicted person. This charm was believed to be not only a cure, but a preservative from the malady, as a protection from the power of demons and witches, who are supposed to have still—as they are related to have in ante-Christian, Gospel and early Christian times—the power of afflicting persons with convulsions, madness, and similar afflictions.

A dispensary doctor, in the county Sligo, relates that, some years ago, he was called to attend a country woman after confinement, and found the poor creature in a dying state, pale and bloodless from *post-partum* hemorrhage. The local nurse, totally ignorant of midwifery, was known, as the country people say, to work "the charm."

The doctor states:—"When I entered the room I found this woman not attending to her charge, but, standing at the door, shaking a mixture of oatmeal, pepper, and salt over the patient. I demanded what she meant, and she answered that it was 'the charm.' My language was not parliamentary, and, pushing the nurse aside, I immediately set to work, and made my patient all right. After all was finished, I re-entered the kitchen, where a number of neighbours had collected, and, in their presence, I was thus addressed by the midwife:—'Doctor, you are not saying half enough for me: did I not save the woman with 'the charm?'" The doctor's reply cannot be recorded.

A certain cure for whooping cough is to pour milk into a saucer, and place it before a ferret; what it does not drink is given to the sufferer. Another cure is to keep the child fasting for some time, then catch a trout, put it in the infant's mouth, and replace it in the stream alive. Another remedy is to draw water against the current from a south-running (desiul) stream, give it to the sick child to drink, then throw the unconsumed liquid away with the current; this must be repeated every morning before sunrise, until the child recovers. Another remedy is to pass the suffering child three times under a female donkey, the ass must then be fed on oaten bread, and what the animal does not consume is given to the patient. Some of the animal's milk is procured, of which the child is made to drink on this and the two following days. A most strange performance for the cure of sick cattle is recounted by Lady Wilde. The exorcist mounts astride on the afflicted animal, holding a bannock (or oatmeal cake), a lump of butter, and a bowl of cream, and says:—"A bite, a sup; a bite, a sup; if it be so ordained, let the beast get well; if not leave it to its fate; but the bannock I will eat."

Another novel remedy for the hooping-cough is to lift the child rapidly into a mill-hopper and out again three times in succession. Any improvement in an ailment occurring on Friday or Saturday is unlucky, and not likely to be permanent; if a person is ill, his bed ought to be placed north and south, not east and west.

A dried fox's tongue draws thorns from the flesh; a robin's breast rubbed on the sore cures "the evil"; the touch of a posthumous child heals a sore mouth. A person who never

saw his (or her) father breathes into the affected mouth three times: (1) in the name of the Father, and (2) of the Son, and (3) of the Holy Ghost.

In the reign of Charles II. several eminent persons became conspicuous under the name of "Strokers." Of these the most renowned was one Valentine Greatrakes, an Irish gentleman, of whom "the Lord Bishop of Derry declared that he had seen dimness cleared and deafness cured, pain drawn out at some extreme part, grievous sores in a few days healed, obstructions and stoppages removed, and cancerous knots, in breasts, dissolved. It is easy to gather from perusal of contemporary records, that these private manipulators were considered, by some, to trench upon the kingly prerogative. Thus Dr. Thomas Allen dissuades persons from applying themselves to seventh sons of these strokers; but these seem to have found much favour nevertheless. Some quality, in their times, seemed to favour the transmission of influence through manipulation." Nor was this manipulation peculiar to the Old World, according to Dr. Cotton Mather, who, in his *Magnalia Christi Americana*, states that it was no rare thing for the old set of Quakers to proselyte people merely by "stroking them, or breathing upon them." This, surely, anticipated latter-day hypnotism.

"Properly investigated, a complete distinction is established between these cures by private individuals and the cures effected by sovereigns. In the former case the cure was exhausting—always needing effort, expenditure of vital force; in the latter case, otherwise. On this point accept the testimony of Leverett the gardener:—'I am more exhausted by stroking thirty or forty people, than by digging eight roods of ground,' said he; whereas the circumstance has already been noted, that Charles II. stroked, on an average, twelve *per diem* for twenty years, thus making up a sum-total of ninety-two thousand one hundred and seven—a sufficient proof that the kingly operation of stroking should not have been exhausting."

Lady Wilde states that there are "certain wise men amongst the peasants who keep pieces of paper transmitted from their fathers which, they say, have been steeped in king's blood. And if the paper is rubbed over the patient, in the name of the Trinity, he will be cured."

The following paragraphs have also been communicated by Dr. John Knott:—

"The practice of the 'royal touch' for the cure of 'king's-evil' by the sovereigns of Great Britain and of France is so well known as to require no lengthened account in this connection. In Ireland, it need hardly be said, that there existed for the afflicted peasant hardly the remotest

chance of royal contact. But where 'needs must,' and appreciative emotion is so strong, something by way of proxy is sometimes made available. In the county Roscommon, some twenty-five to thirty years ago, there lived an elderly woman who possessed the *royal blood and remains.* Patients afflicted with the king's evil paid the usual consecutive Monday-Thursday visits—three in number—and were said to be touched with a blood-stained rolled-up rag. There were mysterious prayers muttered at the same time, and the reports of the results were usually very favourable.

"The chronic glandular enlargements which are so characteristic of the scrofulous constitution in the young is essentially an unsatisfactory condition to treat medicinally, especially in remote parts of the country; and surgical interference, in the pre-antiseptic days, gave still worse results. Accordingly, the unhappy patient usually underwent a series of Monday-Thursday visits—three consecutive—to the seventh son of the locality, who touched, and stroked, and blew upon the tumour. Some prayers were also said.

"A seventh son in a family (of one father and one mother) was always gifted with, at least, some powers of a 'docthor,' even if a daughter, or daughters, had intervened. He was better still if there had been no feminine interruption. But he was practically *infallible* if his father had also been a seventh son.

"The pathology of all these tumours was explained by the presence of a specific worm. The future surgical efficacy of the seventh male baby was sometimes tested directly after birth by sending out the father with his loy to the garden, with instructions to bring in seven earth-worms. These were washed, and placed by the attendant in the right hand of the new-born. The stronger hand of the attendant, of course, enveloped the whole; and the efficacy of the cures of the future disciple of Æsculapius was directly calculated from the limits of the period of survival of the imprisoned earth-worms. I have heard it stated that the latter, in some instances, perished instantaneously.

"Among the locally recognised physical ills which appear specially to affect the labouring peasantry of Ireland is the 'head-fever' (see *ante*, p. 70). It is characterised by violent head and general *malaise*, and follows prolonged severe physical exertion in the stooping posture. It obviously begins in intense congestion of the intra-cranial blood-vessels, which, when not promptly treated at the time, becomes chronic, and so, like other analogous conditions in other parts of the body, leads to permanent structural changes. Under such circumstances the headache also becomes permanent.

"The individual so afflicted is brought to the person who

possesses the 'cure.' A series of three visits is essential, always on Monday or Thursday only, and no intervening Monday or Thursday can be missed without losing the efficacy of the remedy. It is sacred: a string is tied horizontally around the head of the sufferer, with many prayers, and left there till next visit."

In one instance, which came under notice, the wise woman measured the head in two ways. She then declared the head to be swollen, and she set to work to make it the right size again. The child so treated died of epileptic convulsions. The mother implored those who knew not to tell the doctor what the wise woman had done, and went to a neighbour's house sooner than see her child die. The doctor declared he could not account for the death of the child.*

"In the treatment of '*strains*' (Hibernian for sprains) the local medical practitioner is seldom consulted. Even if he is, the after-effects of such injuries are too chronic in their course to bring him any special credit. Accordingly the aged, skilled devotee of the locality is visited on a *Monday* or a *Thursday*, and a thread is securely knotted around the injured joint, after this ligature has been consecrated by the mysterious repetition of certain formulated prayers over it. The patient generally feels relief: there is undoubtedly great power in *suggestion* among so intensely emotional individuals as the Irish peasantry, who, on such occasions, are devotedly desirous of being deceived. [See *ante*, pp. 70–74.]

"The obstinately-recurring abdominal symptoms of many delicate children are very frequently explained by the presence of worms. For the cure recourse is sometimes had to the possessor of a charm. This is another of the Monday-Thursday operations, requiring three consecutive applications. The child is presented, fasting, on Monday or Thursday morning, and is placed sitting by the operator in a bolt-upright position. Absolute silence is now observed, while the charmer produces two pieces of tape, which he places across the vertex of his patient. These are arranged at right angles to one another, so as to form a cross. Their relative position is changed from time to time, while the 'worm-doctbor' repeats to himself, in silence, the mystic formulæ of his awe-inspiring cure. The operation lasts about a quarter of an hour. Three visits are necessary, Monday-Thursday-Monday, or Thursday-Monday-Thursday, as the case may be. No interruption can be allowed in this order.

"Griping pains in the abdomen, whether of man or beast,

* See also vol. i., p. 79.

are very frequently attributed by the uneducated peasantry to the irritating presence of worms. A popular form of treatment, especially, indeed, in the case of quadrupeds, is to tie the '*worm-knot*' on a piece of string over the body of the affected animal (or human being), and then loose the same by the instantaneous snap which the peculiarity of this knot makes possible. This operation is repeated three times; or, in bad cases, three-times-three (nine) times. Each operation is enforced by the aid of a muttered blessing. (See *ante*, p. 73, 74.)

"One of the beautiful crosses in the churchyard of Monasterboice is specially patronised by the neighbouring peasantry when hooping-cough visits the family. The moss which grows on the surface is carefully picked off, and boiled on new milk, of which the affected youngster is then made to drink at regular intervals. It is said by many to be the best of all cures for this troublesome malady."

"In the abbey" (at Dromahaire) writes a correspondent, "a very good priest was buried many years ago. He was such a holy man that the very clay works cures; it is sent for even from America, and people get it from far and near. There is an iron spoon provided to lift it with, and it is generally taken away in a rag. The cure will not work until the rag, or paper in which the clay was carried away, is returned. Some years ago many old rags were to be seen at the grave, and some are still to be observed there. The grave has been filled in more than once in recent times. The country people even mix the clay with water and drink it; it is put on sores as well."*

A very renowned cure for hemorrhoids, a cure really believed in, and practised by many in Sligo, who possess greater faith in it than in the leading physician of the place, is the application of a very common lichen, the *Stricta pulmonaria*, called also the Tree Lung-wort, Hazel Rag, and Crottles. Pile-wort receives its popular name from its supposed efficacy in the cure of this ailment. It can be made up into a jelly, and possesses also a bitter principle used sometimes in beer making.

Saliva is used for many purposes. Lady Wilde states that it was formerly used in baptism. Button scurvy is treated by spitting on the ground, and rubbing on the mixed saliva and dust with the right thumb. Spittle of a fasting person is useful for the cure of warts and of many diseases. In some places, immediately after birth, the infant is spat on by the father for luck; whilst in other parts of the country, the father on such occasions, is carefully kept out of the way. When old crones

* See also vol. i., pp. 296, 297.

gather round a baby to admire it, they spit on the ground, in a circle all round, to keep the fairies away and neutralize the danger of the "evil eye," an interesting but disagreeable custom. A cow is spat upon for luck; bargains are concluded by spitting on the hand or on the "luck-penny."

If an animal is ill, the Arabs spit into the water before giving it to the sick beast to drink, and parents make their children spit at them; the custom is due to the belief that it affords protection against evil spirits.

A very ancient Irish pagan charm, in which spittle appears to be the principal or indeed only emolient, used for wounds or poisons, is translated as follows:—"The poison of a serpent, the venom of a dog, the sharpness of the spear, doth not well in man. The blood of one dog, the blood of many dogs, the blood of the hound of Fliethas—these I invoke. It is not a wart to which my spittle is applied. I strike disease; I strike wounds; I strike the disease of the dog that bites, of the thorn that wounds, of the iron that strikes. I invoke the three daughters of Fliethas against the serpent. Benediction on this body to be healed; benediction on the spittle; benediction on him who casts out the disease."

If so unlucky as to meet a weasel, early in the morning, you should at once spit at it; for if it spits at you first, a great misfortune will befall you. If a person comes unexpectedly on a bad smell he incontinently spits.

A certain remedy for a person suspected of being bewitched, is to watch at the door until a stranger passes, as a stranger is considered to have more power over the fairies than a neighbour. If he spits on the face of the possessed, the power of the evil spirit is broken, and the afflicted restored to reason. In fact, the most effective way of neutralizing the machinations of the fairies is to spit on the object, animate or inanimate, and say, "God bless it"; and people often refuse, fearing to anger the fairies by interfering with their work.

Even at the close of the eighteenth century, the terms "medicine man" and "clergyman" were, in some cases, synonymous. For example, in the curious manual of medicine, entitled *Primitive Physick: or, An Easy and Natural Method of Curing most Diseases*, by the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., already quoted, the treatment of a patient by an Irish "wise woman" would compare favourably with some of the abominations recommended by this amateur physician. On the last page the use of "fasting spittle" is prescribed as a cure for almost all diseases:—

"Fasting spittle, outwardly applied every morning, has sometimes relieved and sometimes cured blindness, contracted sinews from a cut, corns (mixed with chew'd bread, and applied

every morning), cuts (fresh), deafness, eyelids, red and inflamed, scorbutic tetters, sore legs, warts. Taken inwardly, it relieves or cures asthmas, cancers, falling sickness, gout, gravel, king's evil, leprosy, palsy, rheumatism, scurvy, stone, swelled liver."

When a man or beast has just been smitten by the otherwise fatal glance of an "evil eye," the effects can be neutralized by getting the owner of the mischievous optics to spit on the victim three times in succession: "(1) in the name Father, and (2) of the Son, and (3) of the Holy Ghost."

A favourite poultice for wounds, or chronic sores, is composed of scrapings of tallow candles and cabbage leaves boiled together. Another very simple, but unpleasant remedy for an ulcerated leg, was recommended by a "wise woman," to an old man, who carried out her directions with the greatest exactness, and sat with his leg immersed in the water of a bog-hole all night. In the morning his leg was perfectly healed, but as he died of bronchitis, occasioned by the exposure, within a few days, the value of the "cure" is somewhat doubtful.

The following charm for cramp in the leg is, to say the least, very peculiar:—

> "The Devil is tying a knot in my leg
> Mark, Luke, and John, unloose it, I beg,
> Crosses three are made to ease you,
> Two for the thieves and one for Christ Jesu."

The author of this verse appears to have had little belief in the Evangelist Matthew, or possibly the apostle's name had to yield to the exigencies of the metre; the thieves also come in for a large share of notice.

In *Folk-Lore of Plants*, Mr. T. F. T. Dyer states that an old name for the devil's bit (*Scabiosa succisa*) in the northern counties of England, in Scotland, and in the North of Ireland "is 'curl-doddy' from the resemblance of the head of flowers to the curly pate of a boy, this nickname being often used by children, who thus address the plant:

> 'Curly-doddy do my biddin',
> Soop my house, and shoal my widden.'

In Ireland, children twist the stalk, and, as it slowly untwists in the hand, thus address it:—

> 'Curl-doddy on the midden,
> Turn round, an' take my bidden.'"

According to the same writer the wall peniterry (*Parietaria officinalis*) is known in Ireland as "peniterry," and is thus

described in "Father Connell," by the O'Hara Family (chapter xii.):—"A weed called, locally at least, peniterry, to which the suddenly terrified (schoolboy) idler might run in his need, grasping it hard and threateningly, and repeating the following 'words of power':—

> 'Peniterry, peniterry, that grows by the wall,
> Save me from a whipping, or I 'll pull you, roots and all.'"

Young girls were in the habit of gathering milfoil, or yarrow, upon May and All Hallow's Eve, and placing the plant under their pillows, and so dreaming about their future husbands. The herb also banishes evil spirits from those who carry it about their person, and if placed inside the shoe, beneath the foot, endows them with temporary fluency of speech. Yarrow is called, in Irish, "the herb of the seven cures," from its many virtues. Girls dance around it singing:—

> "Yarrow, yarrow, yarrow,
> I bid thee good morrow,
> And tell me before to-morrow
> Who my true love shall be."

Even to dream that you are gathering yarrow, denotes that good fortune will be yours.

In *Folk-Lore of Plants*, Mr. T. F. T. Dyer states that in Ireland the puff-balls of Lycopodium are styled the devil's snuff-box, the nettle his apron, and the convolvulus his garter.

A vast amount of legendary lore is connected with "fairy rings"—little circles of vivid green frequently observed in the darker green of old pastures, and within which the fairies dance on moonlight nights. This curious phenomenon of a very distinctly formed ring, however, "is, owing to the outspread propagations of a particular mushroom, the fairy-ringed fungus, by which the ground is manured, for a richer following vegetation." These fairy rings have, time out of mind, been held in great reverence by the country people, and when May dew is gathered by young girls to improve their complexion, and enhance their charms, they carefully avoid trespassing on the magic circles for fear of offending the "good people," who would be avenged on them by causing them to lose their beauty.

The common foxglove was one of the most potent herbs used by the Druids to increase the efficacy of their charms. It is said by some that the term foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) applied to the deadly but beautiful wild flower, is a Saxon survival from the times when the people who so named it, really believed in the "good folk": for its red flowers were then the "good folk's

gloves"; now shortened—like everything else in this prosaic age—into "foxglove." This idea is of classic origin for:—

> "To keep her slender fingers from the sun,
> Pan through the pastures often times hath run,
> To pluck the speckled foxgloves from their stem,
> And on these fingers neatly placed them."

The fairies do not unresistingly resign their power over herbs to mortals, since they may, in some instances, be used against themselves, and they therefore vigorously punish those who lay unhallowed hands on them. Thus the mandragora or mandrake, supposed to possess animal life and to shriek when uprooted, must be drawn from the soil in which it grows, by means of a dog, as the fairies visit their displeasure on the creature actually abstracting this plant. Shakspeare thus alludes to the superstition:—

> "And shrieks like mandrake torn out of the earth,
> That living mortals hearing them run mad."

As does also the poet Moore:—

> "The phantom shapes—oh, touch them not,
> That appal the maiden's sight,
> Look in the fleshy mandrake's stem,
> That shrieks when plucked at night."

And again:—

> "Such rank and deadly lustre dwells,
> As in those hellish fires that light
> The mandrake's charnel leaves at night."

Ben Jonson, in the *Masque of Queens*, makes one of the hags gathering it say:—

> "I, last night, lay all alone
> On the ground, to hear the mandrake groan;
> And plucked him up, though he grew full low."

Amongst the Romans, various precautions were adopted when digging for it. According to Pliny, "when they intended to take up the root of this plant, they took the wind thereof, and with a sword describing three circles about it, they digged it up, looking towards the west."

The mandrake has a fleshy root, forked and often in form resembling the human body; its juice which was held in great repute, was used for love potions or philters. All parts of the plant are narcotic, and if placed under the head of a patient was supposed to produce sleep. The Irish and others believed that the herb was found only under a gallows, nourished by the

drops which fell from it. The quaint and amusing old botanist, Caleb Threlkeld, in his *Synopsis Stirpium Hibernicarum*, states that it must be pulled with prayer, otherwise the fairies will carry off the puller; but this, he gravely assures his readers, "is an abuse of God's holy ordinance of prayer."

In an Irish MS., said to have been compiled in the thirteenth century, various herbs are enumerated which protected from fairy influence those who possessed them. As in the case of the mandrake, to extract them from the ground was highly perilous, inasmuch as they, also, were all carefully watched over by the "Good People." Many are the virtues of these herbs, and having some about the person is a protection against disease. For their extraction it is necessary that the aid of a cat, a dog, or some living creature be requisitioned. A strong cord is tied to one of the animal's legs, and to the root, and it is made then to act the role of herb-digger. A farmer desirous of procuring a particular herb, borrowed a large dog from a neighbour, drew up the plant he required, in the above manner, and cured a person afflicted with the "falling sickness." The dog, attacked with convulsions, was incontinently hanged, but the next day appeared at his master's door. The dog fell ill a second time, was hanged, left for dead and recovered; but again suffering from convulsions, a neighbour advised that it should be allowed to recover from the fit, and then be killed. The advice was acted on, and the dog reappeared no more.

A cure for consumption is an herb styled *cror-darrig*, or "red hand." It must be pulled by tying the root of the plant to the leg of a dog, otherwise its extraction from the soil is fatal to the mortal who pulls it. The leaves are then squeezed—after which they are burned—and the previously extracted juice drunk by the patient on an empty stomach.

Amongst the Romans it was deemed prudent that some herbs, when gathered for necromantic purposes, should be drawn up by the roots, as in the case where Horace describes Canidia requiring, for her unholy purpose, that the wild fig tree should be pulled up from the earth.

Marsh marigold is considered a plant of great power, and on May day garlands are made of it to put on cattle, and to hang on the door posts to keep the fairies away.

The young buds of the briar are used in spring, and its roots in winter time as medicine. They are boiled for twelve hours, in an earthenware vessel; a cupful of the decoction is administered, at intervals, to the sick person, who falls into a profound slumber, from which he awakes cured. Great efficacy is attributed to the briar, especially in cases of sprain, or dislocation; the species bearing a reddish flower, being considered the best.

A strong twig of this about a yard long is taken, and split evenly from end to end, the pieces being then held by two men, about three feet apart, the "herb doctor" reciting an incantation, and waving his hands. When the twigs touch, a piece of the briar is cut off at the point of contact and bound firmly over the sprain. This ligature is left on for three days, when the sprain is perfectly cured.

Inflammation of the eyes is removed by the application of an amber bead, or of any article of gold; either material should be heated by friction before application. Another remedy is to pierce with a thorn the shell of a living snail, and the fluid that exudes is an unfailing remedy for anything affecting the eyes. For a stye in the eye, pluck ten gooseberry thorns, throw the first away, then point each of the other nine successively towards the stye, and cure will follow infallibly. The tail of a black cat, if rubbed over the eyelid, will effect a rapid cure.

For bruises, burns or sores, heat limestones in the fire, then throw them into water until the latter is hot, and bathe the affected parts once a day until they are healed.

The following charm is also practised:—Select a small stone, smaller than a boy's marble, for each wart you possess, tie them up in "a clean linen bag, and throw it out on the highway; then find out a stone in some field or ditch with a hollow, in which rain or dew may have lodged, and wash the warts seven times therein, and, after the operation, whoever picks up the bag of stones will have a transfer of the warts."

Verbena officinalis, or vervain is esteemed, in many cases, a sovereign remedy. When this plant is pulled a peculiar incantation is used, which is translated as follows:—

> "Vervain, thou growest upon holy ground,
> In Mount Calvary thou wert found,
> Thou curest all sores, and all diseases,
> And in the name of the holy Jesus
> I pull you out of the ground."

The superstition of the ancient cult is here transferred to the present professed religion, for the groundwork of the charm has apparently been retained, but words of Christian ritual have been substituted for the invocation of the ancient deities of the land. It is alleged that vervain was one of the plants held sacred by the Druids, and was, in consequence, adopted into Christian usage. Although gathered by witches to do mischief in their incantations, yet, on the other hand, it can be employed against their machinations, and it "hinders witches from their will." Vervain has long been in repute as a love philtre. In Germany a wreath of vervain is given to the newly-married bride. In

France, as in Ireland, it is gathered under the different changes of the moon, with secret incantations, and is then supposed to possess remarkable curative powers. Virgil describes it as a charm used by an enchantress :—

> "Bring running water, bind those altars round
> With fillets, with vervain strew the ground."

The wood anemone is used as a plaster for wounds. Mint tied round the waist is a sure remedy for disorders of the stomach. The juice of carrots is employed for purifying the blood.

A cure for the mumps is to tie a halter round the neck of the sick child and lead it to a stream in which it must be bathed three times.

The Irish peasant carefully hides or burns the cuttings from his hair, or the clippings from his nails; if he loses a tooth he throws it away over his left shoulder or into the fire; a mother will not permit the nails of her infant to be cut until it attains a certain age. Sir Thomas Browne, commenting on the superstition, says :—"The set and statutory times for paring nails and cutting hair is thought by many a point of consideration, which is, perhaps, but the continuance of ancient superstition. To the Romans, it was peculiar to pare their nails upon the Nundinæ observed every ninth day; and it was also feared by others in certain days of the week." Clippings of the hair and nails of a child, tied up in a linen cloth, and placed under the cradle of a sick infant will cure convulsions. Here the disease is supposed to be absorbed in a representative portion of the body of a stranger.

In old Norse belief the nails of the dead were always cut, as otherwise they hastened the completion of the Death Ship which is to announce the end of the world. According to the Jewish Talmud nails must be cut in a certain order, and the parings burnt or hidden. The custom is still observed in the East. In one of the sacred books of the Parsees there is a prayer to be said over nail parings lest the evil demon turn them into weapons, and use them against their former owners. This apparently inexplicable custom is elucidated by the practices of the Hindoos and South Sea Islanders, who make little figures of hair, nail clippings, or any article belonging to a person they wish to injure or bewitch, and then pierce, distort, or burn the figure so made, hoping thus to compass the death of their enemy. The same superstition was, in England, embodied in this couplet :—

> "He that cutteth hair or horn,
> Shall rue the day that he was born."

Another certain cure is effected by some part of the clothes and

hair being buried with a harrow-pin at the site of the first fit of falling-sickness. Whoever digs them up will get the disease.

However, it is permissible, and even lucky, to cut the hair at the new moon, and by the light of the moon; but it should never be attempted on a Friday night.

From observing the very visible effects of the moon upon the level of the ocean, mankind in all ages have imagined its influence to extend not only to human affairs, but also to the state of the human body. Travellers in the East draw attention to the fact that the natives prefer to commence a journey at the time of the new moon and a similar custom obtained amongst the Jews in ancient times:—

> "For the goodman is not at home
> He is gone a long journey:
> He hath taken a bag of money with him;
> He will come home at the full moon."
>
> *Proverbs* vii. 19, 20.

And again in Samuel xx. 24, we read:—"So David hid himself in the field, and, when the new moon was come, the King sat him down to eat meat."

Mr. T. F. T. Dyer states that, "according to Vallancey, the Irish, on seeing the new moon, knelt down, repeated the Lord's Prayer, at the conclusion of which they cried, 'May thou leave us as safe as thou has found us!' And even still they make the sign of the cross on themselves (*Notes and Queries*, 5th series, Vol. v., p. 364), and repeat the words of the blessing:—'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen!' On these occasions, they fancy that they will obtain anything they may wish for."

At the new moon, it is not an uncommon practice for people to point with an iron knife at the moon and say:—

> "New moon, new moon, be true unto me,
> That I ere the morrow my true love may see."

The knife then is placed under the pillow, and strict silence observed, or the charm is of no effect.

Hair was an emblem of virility, baldness was the natural antithesis. This will account for a lock of hair being considered the representative of the owner's self, when life through it is sought to be taken or blasted by magic.

The idea at the root of the construction of the similitude of an animal, or of a human being devoted to destruction, varies somewhat in different countries, but it is of world-wide practice, and is as old and general as any primitive religious idea. After completion the image is pierced with pins, thorns, or other

pointed instruments; or if of wax or like substance it is slowly roasted before a fire in the belief that each prick inflicted on the image will occasion a mortal pang in the human being it represents, and that melting before a fire, or burning, will ensure gradual dwindling and pining of the original, or sudden or violent death, according to the treatment to which the similitude is subjected.

Amongst the South Sea Islanders prayers, offerings, and curses, however numerous, were not sufficient for the purpose of compassing the death of the victim. Ellis, in *Polynesian Researches*, explains that it is necessary to secure something connected with the body of the object desired to be destroyed. The parings of the nails, a lock of the hair, the saliva or other secretions from the body, or even a portion of the food which the person is to eat; any one of these was considered as a vehicle by which the demon entered the person, who thus became "possessed." "It was called *tubu*, *i.e.*, growing or causing to grow. When procured, the *tara* was performed, the sorcerer took the hair, saliva, or other substance that belonged to his victim, to his house, or *marœ*, performed his incantations over it, and offered his prayers; the demon was then supposed to enter the *tubu*, and through it the individual who suffered from the enchantment. If it was a portion of food, similar ceremonies were observed, and the piece of bread-fruit, fish, etc., supposed by the process to be impregnated by the demon, was placed in the basket of the person for whom it was designed, and, if eaten, inevitable destruction was expected to follow. The use of the portable spittoon by the Sandwich Islander chiefs, in which the saliva was carefully deposited, carried by a confidential servant, and buried every morning; and the custom of the Tahitians in scrupulously burning or burying the hair when cut off, and also furnishing to each individual his distinct basket of fruit, originated in their dread of sorcery by any of these means. When the *tara* had been performed and the *tubu* secured, the effects were violent and death speedy. The most acute agonies and terrific distortions of the body were experienced; the wretched sufferer appeared in a state of frantic madness, or, as they expressed it, torn by the evil spirit, while he foamed and writhed under his dreadful power."

Many legends yet recount the miraculous cures effected by the great Irish physicians or "medicine men" of pagan times. The most widely known of all their celebrities was Dianket of the Dedanann race, who was afterwards regarded as the God of physic. At the second battle of Moytirra he prepared a medicinal bath, and endued it with such sanative powers that the wounded warriors who were plunged into it emerged healed and restored

to strength. Many ages before the Christian era a king of Leinster was hardly beset by a neighbouring and hostile tribe which used poisoned weapons. His Druid advised him to have a bath prepared before the next battle, consisting of the milk of one hundred and fifty white and hornless cows. As fast as the king's men were wounded they were plunged into the fluid, from which they arose perfectly healed. It is thus apparent that the idea of the existence of an elixir of life is of very ancient date in Ireland.

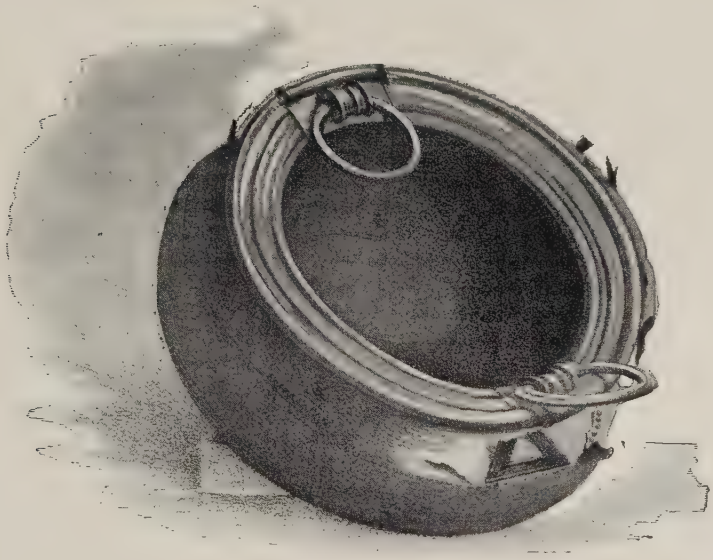

FIG. 51.
Bronze Caldron found in the townland of Raffery, parish of Killinchy, county Down. Extreme outside diameter twenty-two inches. Reproduced from the *Ulster Journal of Archæology*.

In the *Book of Rights*, bronze caldrons are mentioned as the tribute of inferior chiefs to those of superior rank, and in mediæval times, if the fact happened to be recorded by the annalists of an Irish chief pillaging the territory of his neighbour, an enumeration of the number of copper caldrons carried off is sometimes given. The scene in Macbeth, with Hecate and the witches around the seething caldron, is a good description of British superstition.

> "And now about the caldron sing
> Like elves and fairies in a ring,
> Enchanting all that you put in."

Irish magical caldrons appear to have been used, not for destructive so much as for healing purposes. Healing herbs were decocted, incantations were pronounced, and wounded warriors carried from the battlefield and plunged into the magical liquid, were immediately healed and enabled to return to the fight: for the Druids.

> "By force of potent spells, wicked magic,
> And conjurations horrible to hear,
> Could set the ministers of Hell at work,
> And raise a slaughtered army from the earth,
> And make them live and breathe and fight again."

A fine bronze caldron (fig. 51) was found in a bog long used for supplying fuel (at one time at least forty feet higher), in which numbers of bronze implements have from time to time come to light. The vessel, of very superior workmanship, is formed of golden coloured bronze, as thin as writing paper; the thinness and evenness of the plates, and the ingenious mode of affixing the handles, so as to equalize the strain in lifting the caldron when filled, are proofs of advanced technical skill.

There is a curious reference in the *Book of Lismore* to the magic caldron or bath. Caoilte, at the earnest entreaty of two high-born ladies, "brought the full of his right hand of potent fairy herbs with him, such as he knew were used by the chief women of the Fenians, and he gave them to the women and they made a bath thereof, and bathed therein, and this brought back the love of their husbands on them." Camden also mentions this custom as existing in his time.

The ancient physicians were indeed clever at their profession. They diagnosed the nature of disease, not by pulse, temperature, and general symptoms, but by the character of the groans emitted by the sufferer. A chief, grievously wounded in battle, had poisonous matter placed, by a treacherous attendant, in his hurts. The wounds closed, but the agony suffered by the patient was excruciating. A terribly learned doctor, styled "the prophetic physician," from his great skill in diagnosis (though from the story, it would appear that his pupils, not so much as he himself, possessed this valuable gift), arrived with his three apprentices, and found the chief lying prostrate, groaning loudly from the effects of intense pain.

"What groan is that?" inquired the doctor of his first apprentice. "It is from a poisoned herb," replied number one.

"And what groan is that?" demanded the doctor of number two apprentice. "It is from a hidden reptile," replied number two.

"And what groan is that?" inquired the doctor of the third

apprentice. "It is from a poisoned seed," replied number three.

Then the whole four set to work on the unlucky sufferer, cauterized the wounds with red-hot irons, after which the poisonous substances were extracted from beneath the skin, and the chief not only survived the operation, but was actually cured.

If one may judge from mediæval MSS., these "medicine men" of the pagan era were paid on the principle of "no cure no pay." When in attendance on a patient, "the doctor" was entitled to his "coshering" (*i.e.*, free board and lodgings), together with that of his apprentices or pupils; but if he failed to restore the patient to health, he could be made refund his fee and the cost of the keep of his assistants.

> "Physicians mend or end us,
> Secundem artem; but although we sneer
> In health, when sick we call them to attend us,
> Without the least propensity to jeer."

CHAPTER VI.

STONE WORSHIP.

Pillar-Stones—The most ancient of Monuments—Various causes to which their erection is attributable—Traditional legendary belief regarding their influence over women and men—Pagan Pillar-Stones Reconsecrated to the New Religion—The Worship wide-spread—Instances cited—St. Patrick overturns Pillar-Stones—Human Beings metamorphosed into Pillar-Stones—By Irish Saints, by Druids, Magicians, Witches, and Mermaids—Divination Stones—Speaking Stones—Stones to which Offerings of Food were made—Hungry Stones—Holed Stones—The larger-sized apertures used for the cure of disease—The ailment left behind by the act of transit—Hence the idea of regeneration and the remission of sins—These ideas adopted by the Christians—Anecdotes regarding their adoption—Creeping or passing under certain objects, or passing through a cleft sapling, &c., gradually substituted for the original rite—Holed Stones with diminutive apertures—Adopted into Christianity—Their wide-spread use—Connected with marriage rites, and with women—Alignments of Stones—Druid's, Brehon's, and Hag's Chairs or Seats—Inauguration Stones—The Stone of Destiny, or the Coronation Stone, in Westminster Abbey—The Blarney Stone—Rocking Stones.

A SENTIMENT common to human beings in all ages, and among all races of men, is an ardent desire to leave behind something to perpetuate, amongst succeeding generations, the memory of their existence. This sentiment, doubtless, led primitive man to plant erect in the ground the rough pillar-like stones he found lying prostrate on the surface. In corroboration of this we notice that these hoary monuments are found in almost every country throughout the globe; in Ireland they may have been mere cenotaphs, but were doubtless erected for a variety of other purposes. These rude monoliths, or pillar-stones, though found in Great Britain and on the Continent, are not very numerous in Ireland. They are by some antiquaries supposed to be idols, lithic monuments in commemoration of the death of some renowned warrior, or to have been erected on the spot where some celebrated combat, or battle, took place. In support of this it is stated that in Scotland they are styled "cat-stones," derived

from *cath*, "a battle." There is, for example, a stone monument called the "Cat's Stone," in the county Westmeath. Also it is possible they may have been employed for the prosaic, but useful purpose of landmarks. Some writers have even suggested that they were erected for, and used as sundials, and that, like the pillars of the temple of the sun at Balbec, these

> ". . . lonely columns stand sublime,
> Flinging their shadows from on high,
> Like dials, which the wizard Time,
> Had raised to count his ages by."

Pillar-stones are still popularly considered to exemplify that worship of generative power which prevails in many other lands, and traditionary legendary belief regarding their influence over women for obtaining favourable results during their confinements, and over men in securing progeny, is, if not very widespread, at least far from extinct.

There are numerous authenticated examples of the widespread custom, adopted by Christians on the Continent, especially at Rome, of devoting to Christian uses monuments, such as temples or tombs, that had been anciently pagan, and this system was in primitive times extensively followed in Ireland. Thus pillar-stones were consecrated to the new faith by simply engraving on them the sign of the Greek cross. If we are to believe the later written lives of St. Patrick, he found the people worshipping pillars, some of which he caused to be overthrown, but the majority appear to have been reconsecrated to the new worship. Traces of the survival of the worship of standing-stones are extremely interesting. There are many examples from ancient Greece; similar instances occur in almost all early religions, and they are still preserved in folk-lore.

The Kaffirs, a tribe of the Hindu Kush, say of the stones they worship: "This stands for God; but we know not His shape"; and therefore they leave the rock untouched by chisel. Ages before the appearance of Mahomet people flocked annually to Mecca to worship at the Kaaba, and to adore the sacred Black Stone. The astute reformer perceived that the custom was too firmly rooted to be easily eradicated, so he grafted it on to his remodelled religion, and made the performance of a pilgrimage to the Kaaba a religious duty. The Hindoos allege that the Black Stone in the wall of the Kaaba is no other than the Linga of Mahadeva, one of their gods, and that when the Kaaba was rebuilt it was placed in the wall to withdraw it from public adoration; but the Prophet's new converts would not relinquish its worship, and the Mollahs were at length forced to connive at, and finally to tolerate, and even encourage the cult.

In a passage in the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*—a comparatively modern MS.—the demolition of an idol styled *Cenn Cruaich* or *Crom Cruach*, "the chief idol of Erin," ornamented "with gold and with silver, and having twelve other idols ornamented with brass around him," in the plain of *Mag Slecht*, near Granard, is described. St. Patrick, of course, destroyed or overthrew the chief idol, and "the earth swallowed the other twelve idols to their heads." It appears as if the legend was a current popular story committed to writing from the vernacular, at a comparatively late period, and relating to a "standing-stone" and its

FIG. 52.

Rows of pillar-stones at Carnac, in Brittany.

surrounding circle of boulders. *Crom* or *Crum* signifies, according to some authorities, a maggot, so *Crom Cruach* is literally the "Bloody Maggot." Another idol, in the west of Connaught, was styled *Crom Dubh*, or the "Black Maggot," and, in the province, the name is still intimately connected with the first Sunday in August. There seems to be, in these names, and in their connection with the first day of autumn, some indistinct reference to death and its accompanying corruption.

In many localities a conspicuous standing-stone, placed in a prominent position, either by the hand of nature or that of man,

so as at a distance somewhat to resemble the human figure, is called by the Irish-speaking peasantry *far-breaga*, a false man. In the same way the writer has heard the term applied to a "scare-crow."

When primitive traditionary tales, and mythology, were converted into religion, it was taught that the gods possessed the power of transforming human beings into pillar-stones, for instance, Lot's wife and the giant Ardfind, are examples from Hebraic and Norse belief. The standing-stones at Carnac (fig. 52) are said to be one of Cæsar's armies metamorphosed, by Celtic magic, into stones; but a much earlier belief relates that they were erected by diminutive supernatural beings who carried the blocks with them from a far distant East, and set them on end at Carnac, with the object of confusing seekers after a great treasure, which they buried under one of these numerous monoliths.

O'Curry gives an extract from an Irish tale, in which a Druid transforms three of his enemies into rocks. When life and magical powers were attributed to inanimate objects nothing was more natural than to suppose that stones and trees might be converted into men and women, and conversely men and women were turned into trees and stones. Even with the Greeks it meets us in the well-known fable of Deucalion and Pyrrha re-peopling the earth by casting stones behind them, which changed into men and women. The tale of stones turning into human beings meets us, at the present day, in almost every myth of creation collected by anthropologists in Africa, Polynesia, and America. In some cases trees take the place of stones, and transformation of men into both are among the commonest occurrences, as wherever natural objects present a resemblance to the human figure such like myths sprang up. Daphne is transformed into a laurel, Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, and the Cornish maidens and the Sligo mermaid's children into a circle of stones.

In the south of Cork, there is a pillar stone, which bears, in the imagination of the peasantry, a rude resemblance to a female figure. The natives of the locality suppose this to represent a woman, who, for her misdeeds, had been petrified by a magician. The legend is especially interesting, as the magician was in this instance, according to popular tradition, an Irish saint.

Very little of the old church of Fernagh in the county Kerry remains, except a fragment of the east wall. The saint after whom the church is named had a large tract of pasturage adjoining the sacred edifice. The woman in charge of his cows, stole and sold the saint's butter, whereupon the holy man turned the dishonest woman into a pillar stone, the butter rolls into

pebbles, and placed them near the church, where they are still to be seen. The churn and other vessels used in the butter-making were also turned into stone. The woman happened to be pregnant at the time, which is shown by the stone to the present day. She also had a rope with which she used to tie cross cows, and the stake to which it was attached grew into a tree. The rock in which the cavities occur appears to rest on its natural site on a sloping bank, the north side level with the earth (fig. 53), and the south side (fig. 54) about three feet and a half above it. Upon its surface are eight depressions,

Fig. 53.

"The Butter Rolls" (probably cursing-stones), north side, Fernagh old Church, county Kerry, from a photo.

varying in size, three of them being slight, and five of good size. Each cavity contains a worn oval pebble, locally known as a butter lump. The surface of the rock is about seven feet square, the larger basins are thirteen inches in diameter, by about six inches in depth. In the centre of the rock surface is laid the upper half of a quern, found not long ago in a neighbouring field, but it has otherwise no connection with the other stones or petrified "meskins." When the devotees arrive at this rock, they pray and turn these stones. It is firmly believed

that they could not be taken away. Indeed several persons have tried to do so, but have always failed, the stones being found again in their places next morning. A young lad not long ago attempted to steal one of them, but his horse would not cross the bridge out of the parish, so he deemed it wiser to leave the sacred stone back again. There can be little question as to this site having been formerly a "cursing place," and that these stones were at one time used for maledictory and other purposes.

FIG. 54.

"The Butter Rolls" (probably cursing-stones), south side, Fernagh old Church, county Kerry, from a photo.

The saints appear to have thus inherited from the Druidical priesthood, the art of turning people they disliked into stone.* One of these holy men was persecuted by a malignant

* Toland's *History of the Druids.* (Ed. 1814, pages 130-131). There are "in the highlands of Scotland and in the adjacent iles numberless Obelisces, or stones set up on end; some 30, some 24 feet high, others higher or lower; and this sometimes where no such stones are to be dug, Wales being likewise full of them; and some there are in the least cultivated parts of England, with very many in Ireland. In most places of this last kingdom, the common

hag, who followed him about, hindering the completion of the edifices he was engaged in erecting. The saint in the act of superintending the work on a round tower, perceiving his opponent at the base of the building commencing her incantations, leaped to the ground and struck her on the head with his hammer. The country people show the witch metamorphosed into stone by the blow, lying close to the foundation, and still bearing the mark of the holy man's hammer. This round tower was never finished, for one day, when the architect was at the top completing the cap, the saint, who strongly objected to the sum of money the builder was demanding for his fee, had the scafolding removed, and thought that he could then dictate his own terms to the designer. "It is easier to pull down than to build," was the sole comment of the latter, as he commenced to throw down the masonry. On seeing the tables thus turned, the saint begged him to desist, and the price he had demanded would be paid, but the architect, like a wise man, would not again trust himself in sacerdotal power, and declined either to repair or complete the work, so the round tower remains unfinished to this day.

Crofton Croker recounts a legend of human beings, metamorphosed by magic into stones, and in the townland of Scurmore, parish of Castleconnor, county Sligo, there are some large boulders, bearing the singular title of "Children of the Mermaid"; to them is attached a legend which accounts for their origin. It is as follows:—In olden days, a man walking along the sea shore, discovered amongst the rocks, a mermaid lying asleep. Now, everybody, or at least everybody in that locality, knows that if possession be obtained of an article of a sea nymph's costume, she at once loses her aquatic nature, both as regards form and disposition, and degenerates into an ordinary mortal.* The man therefore approached stealthily, became the possessor of the magic garment, and led the metamorphosed nymph home as his bride. Retribution, however, finally overtook him. His seven children were nearly grown to maturity, when one day his youngest born saw him abstract the magic garment from its hiding-place, to

people believe these Obelisks to be men, transform'd into stones by the magic of the Druids. This is also the notion the vulgar have in Oxfordshire of Rollwright stones, and in Cornwall of the hurlers; erect stones so call'd, but belonging to a different class from the Obelisks, whereof I now discourse. And indeed, in every country the ignorant people ascribe to the devil or some supernatural power, at least to giants, all works which seem to them to exceed human art or ability. Thus among other things (for recording their traditions will have its pleasure as well as usefulness), they account for the Roman camps and military ways, calling such the devil's dykes, or the like."

* For the story of the capture of another mermaid, see *ante*, p. 127.

deposit it where he imagined it would be still more secure. The youth ran off to describe what he had seen to his mother, who seized with a sudden yearning to return to her native element, resumed possession of her property, and bade her children follow her to the sea-shore. Being now re-endowed with all the attributes of a mermaid, she touched each in succession, changed them into seven stones, and then plunged into the ocean, and has never since been seen, but the boulders, seven in number, still stand on the circumference of a circular rampart surrounding a fine tumulus called Cruckancornia.

It appears to have been a very prevalent belief throughout Ireland, that some of the large stone circles were human beings, or giants, metamorphosed by magic into rocks. In one of Crofton Croker's fairy legends, a mermaid is secured by the abstraction of an enchanted cap. A story very much resembling the Sligo legend of the Mermaid, is told by Mr. Hibbert, in his description of the Shetland Isles. The mermaid, after resumption of her long discarded skin, said to the deserted Shetlander, as she dived into depths unknown—"Farewell, I loved you very well when I remained on earth, but I always loved my first husband better." In Denmark, there are families who believe themselves to be descended from such mixed marriages, and similar tales existed in the county Kerry, relative to the families of O'Flaherty and O'Sullivan, whilst the Macnamaras, of the county Clare, owe their name it is said, to a tradition of the same nature. Mermaids are described by Irish fishermen as "women with fishy tails," thus unwittingly plagiarising the lines from Horace, *Desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne*,* *i.e.* a woman beautiful above, ends in the tail of a fish. "The Irish word 'merrow,' correctly written *mornadh*, or *mornach*, answers exactly to the English 'mermaid,' and it is the compound of *muir*, the sea, and *oigh*, a maid. It is also used to express a sea-monster, like the Armoric and Cornish *morhuch*, to which it evidently bears analogy." According to Ussher, "morgan" signifies, in the ancient British, "born of the sea"; and "Morgan" is, at present, a very common name in Wales.

According to Crofton Croker, St. John's Well lies at the foot of a hill about three miles from Ennis, and the water is believed to possess the power of restoring the use of the limbs and curing defective sight. Near the well there is a small lough, said to be the abode of a mermaid, which used to appear very frequently. "This lady of the lake was observed resorting to the cellar of Newhall, the seat of Mr. M'Donall. The butler, perceiving the

* Figuratively, a description of bad taste, and incongruity of style.

wine decrease rapidly, determined, with some of his fellow-servants, to watch for the thief, and at last they caught the mermaid in the act of drinking it. The enraged butler threw her into a caldron of boiling water, when she vanished, after uttering three piercing shieks, leaving only a mass of jelly behind. Since that period her appearances have been restricted to once in every seven years."

There are but few freshwater mermaids; they are only plentiful in the sea, and their singing heralds a storm. Some fishermen still believe in the real existence of mermaids; a man declared he had actually seen one on the rocks combing her hair, but on his approach she took a header into the deep. But how can we blame these simple folk, when, in the Irish annals, under date A.D. 807, a dead mermaid is chronicled as having been cast by the waves upon the sea beach, and details are given of her dimensions which almost rival those of the sea-serpent of the nineteenth century. At a later date, in the year 1118, it is gravely recounted that two mermaids were caught by fishermen.

Mermen are not as attractive creatures as mermaids; their hair and teeth are green, their noses red, and their eyes sunk, resembling those of a pig, so that there is little cause of wonder at mermaids occasionally allowing themselves to be captured by good-looking fishermen.

The following was recounted by a countryman, a native of Kilross, county Sligo:—Long ago there lived a celebrated magician who possessed a cow that brought wealth and prosperity to her owner. One of his neighbours, with the assistance of his son, succeeded in driving it off for the purpose of stealing it. The magician, soon discovering his loss, pursued and overtook the thieves. In his hand he bore a magical wand, and, overcome with passion, struck with it the cow, the boy, as well as the thief, thereby metamorphosing them all into stone. In the centre stands the thief, represented by a pillar-stone more than six feet high; near him is the boy, of lesser proportions, and a slab, lying prostrate, represents the cow (fig. 55). Another countryman stated that the magician was the celebrated witch Vera. He styled the pillar-stone Clochtogla, *i.e.* "the lifted stone," a fairly conclusive proof that it is all that remains in position of a former cromleac. As already recounted (*ante*, vol. i., pp. 360 and 361), Vera, according to one legend, met her death on the Slieve-na-Cailleach hills; according to another legend, Vera was drowned when trying to cross *Loch-da-ghedh*, in the mountains above Kilross, where her "house" is still pointed out. *Loch-da-ghedh*, *i.e.* Lough Dagea, the Lake of the Two Geese (see p. 271), has, even at the present day, the reputation of being the deepest in the county Sligo. One countryman stated that

Fig. 55.—The Thief, the Boy, and the Cow, Parish of Kilross, Co. Sligo. Photo by Kilgannon, Sligo.

there is an underground outlet from it, and if anything were thrown into it, "it would come out at the bridge of Denmark!" He would not say, however, whether Vera's body did so or not. Another countryman recounted that it was once essayed to drain the lake for the purpose of recovering the treasure at the bottom, which was guarded by a huge monster; but when the workmen commenced operations they imagined they saw their homesteads on the plain in flames, and, going down to extinguish them, found it was the good people who had deceived them (*ante*, p. 157). When they returned to their work the trench they had made, to draw off the water, was filled up.

Kuno Meyer found many references to the Protean character of Vera in Irish MSS. He quotes one in which she is styled "The old woman of Beare." The reason "was that she had fifty foster-children in Beare. She had seven periods of youth, one after another, so that every man reached death by old age before her, so that her grand-children and great grand-children were tribes and races," before she finally succumbed to old age and debility and sang what may be styled her death song, commencing:—

> "My life ebbs from me like the sea,
> Old age has made me yellow."

The antithesis of Wordsworth's well known lines:—

> "... An old age serene and bright
> And lovely as a Lapland night
> Shall lead thee to thy grave."

It would appear from this Irish poem that Vera had been "a famous hetaira in her time." In it she compares her present life with that passed by her in her younger days:—

> "It is riches
> That you love, not men:
> In the time when we lived,
> It was men we loved.
>
> "The maidens rejoice
> When Mayday comes to them:
> For me sorrow is meeter,
> For I am wretched and an old woman.
>
> "I hold no sweet converse,
> No wethers are killed at my wedding,
> My hair is all but grey,
> The mean veil over it is no pity.
>
> "Once I was with kings
> Drinking mead and wine:
> To-day I drink whey-water
> Among withered old women."

In the same MS. Vera is also described as the mother of St. Fintan, and in another as the wife of a well-known poet

of the eighth century, or more probably of an ancient mythical personage—a kind of demi-god—of similar name to the poet. Kuno Meyer states that the demi-god was certainly one of Vera's lovers as appears from the title of a now lost tale entitled *Serc Caillige Bérre do Fhothad Canainne.* He also cites other MSS. in which a quatrain, translated as follows, is ascribed to Vera:—

> "I have an increase of sight, a keenness that does not . . . ,
> One seems to me to be two, two seems to me three."

It is not, however, explained as to whether Vera thus gave expression to her feelings after one of her drinking bouts.*

The above quoted poem has recently been literally translated by Kuno Meyer in *Otia Merseiana.* The lyric appears in two MSS., in the Library, Trinity College, Dublin, of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively, but on grounds of structure and language the Professor is inclined to date back its original composition to the eleventh century.

The poem of thirty-six four-lined stanzas, abridged by Mr. Stephen Gwynn in his metrical rendering to sixteen stanzas (as several of the transitions were very abrupt) appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* (March, 1901) under the heading *A Specimen of Irish Mediæval Poetry,* and is here reproduced by kind permission of the Author and of Mr. Courtney, the Editor of the *Review.*

Mr. Stephen Gwynn observes "that except for the rearrangement of the order and some slight expansions of the magnificent image which recurs throughout, my version is very close to the original and at times almost identical with the literal rendering," and again "the conflict between the formal protestation of a late assumed religion and the real cry of the heart is true enough to nature and it is frequently present in the Ossianic literature."

> "*Ebbing, the wave of the sea*
> *Leaves, where it wantoned before,*
> *Wan and naked the shore,*
> *Heavy the clotted weed:*
> *And in my heart, woe is me!*
> *Ebbs a wave of the sea.*

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* For a description of the attributes of Vera, see *ante,* vol. i., pp. 360–364. *The Vision of Mac Conglinne,* pp. 6, 131–134, 208–210; *Otia Merseiana,* vol. i., pp. 119–128. Professor Whitley Stokes states that in Scotland a proverb is ascribed to her:—

> "Chuala mi 'chubhag gun bhiadh ambhroinn,
> Chunnaic mi 'n searrach 's a chúlaobh rium,
> Chunnaic mi 'n tseilcheag air an lic luim,
> 'S dh 'aithnich mi nach ruchadh a' bhliadhn' ud leam."

From this it is evident that Vera was no ordinary "witch," but a goddess of the Elder Faiths and whose worship was not restricted to Ireland.

"I am the Woman of Beare.
Foul am I that was fair:
Gold-embroidered smocks I had,
Now in rags am hardly clad.

"Arms, now so poor and thin,
Staring bone and shrunken skin,
Once were lustrous, once caressed
Chiefs and warriors to their rest.

"Not the sage's power, nor lone
Splendour of an aged throne,
Wealth I envy not, nor state:
Only women folk I hate.

"On your heads, while I am cold,
Shines the sun of living gold;
Flowers shall wreathe your necks in May;
For me, every month is gray.

"Yours the bloom: but ours the fire,
Even out of dead desire.
Wealth, not men, ye love; but when
Life was in us, we loved men.

"Fair the men, and wild the manes
Of their coursers on the plains;
Wild the chariots rocked, when we
Raced by them for mastery.

"Lone is Femen: vacant, bare,
Stands in Bregon Ronan's Chair.
And the slow tooth of the sky
Frets the stones where my dead lie.

"The wave of the great sea talks:
Through the forest winter walks.
Not to-day by wood and sea,
Comes King Diarmuid here to me.

"I know what my king does.
Through the shivering reeds, across
Fords no mortal strength may breast
He rows—to how chill a rest!

"Amen! Time ends all.
Every acorn has to fall.
Bright at feasts the candles were.
Dark is here the house of prayer.

"I, that when the hour was mine,
Drank with kings the mead and wine,
Drink whey-water now, in rags
Praying among shrivelled hags.

"Amen! Let my drink be whey,
Let me do God's will all day,
And, as upon God I call,
Turn my blood to angry gall.

"Ebb, flood, and ebb: I know
Well the ebb, and well the flow,
And the second ebb, all three,
Have they not come home to me?

"Came the flood that had for waves
Monarchs, mad to be my slaves,
Crested as by foam with bounds
Of wild steeds and leaping hounds.

"Comes no more that flooding tide
To my silent dark fireside.
Guests are many in my hall,
But a hand has touched them all.

"Well is with the isle that feels
How the ocean backward steals:
But to me my ebbing blood
Brings again no forward flood.

"*Ebbing, the wave of the sea*
Leaves, where it wantoned before,
Changed past knowing the shore,
Lean and lonely and gray;
And far and farther from me
Ebbs the wave of the sea."

The witch or goddess Cailleach Vera possessed a celebrated bull called Conraidh. One day it strayed away from its pasturage and swam across a creek, which Vera jumped over. She was so enraged that she struck the animal with her magical rod and turned it into stone. The bull-shaped rock is to be seen to this very day.

At Moytirra, near Highwood, overlooking Lough Arrow, in the county Sligo, there is a huge rectangular block of limestone, nearly 18 feet in height, a little over 7 feet broad on two of its sides, and 11 feet 6 inches on the others. It conveys, at first sight, the idea of being a pillar-stone, but examination shows it to be, in reality, an erratic boulder, placed in its present position by the hand of nature. It was originally of greater bulk, for two immense pieces have, through the agency of frost, or other natural causes, been torn from its sides, and now lie prostrate at the base. This huge block is called the "Eglone" (fig. 56), and the country people explain its origin by recounting that the boulder represents a giant, who had a dispute with a magician, and sought to kill him, but the latter was too powerful, and metamorphosed the giant into stone by a blow of his magical wand. It is stated that there is a reference to this legend in the MS. notes of the Ordnance Survey.

Crofton Croker, in his *Killarney Legends*, describes "The Druid's Circle," situated near Killarney. It consists of a

circular embankment, within which stand seven upright stones. At a distance of about forty feet from the southern side of the enclosure are two upright stones of much larger dimensions. The following legend about the monument was related by a peasant of this neighbourhood :—" A long time ago there were

Fig. 56.

The "Eglone," near the Village of Highwood, Co. Sligo—a giant metamorphosed into stone.

two giants, and they had seven sons ; and these two big stones are the giants, and the seven little ones are their children ; and they thought to conquer the country, and take all before them ; so they made war upon Donald Egeelagh (Daniel of the Lake), who lived down at Ross then—a mighty great prince he was,

and a great enchanter. So when he could not get the better of the giants, and their seven sons, by fair fighting, he went to his enchantments, and turned them into stones—and there they are from that day to this."

Many years ago the island of Inisbofin was unknown, being rendered invisible through enchantment; but one day two fishermen, in a currach (a boat formed of wickerwork, covered with horse or cow hide), were lost in a dense fog and drifted on to a rock, on which they landed and lighted a fire, but no sooner had the flame touched the rock than the fog suddenly lifted and the fishermen found themselves on the solid land of Inisbofin, which has ever since remained. On one side of the shingly beach, on which the discoverers found themselves, was the ocean, on the other side a fresh water lake. Close to them they perceived a hag, or witch, driving a white cow into the lake, and as it entered the water she struck it with a wand that was in her hand, when it turned into a rock. One of the fishermen, angry at what he saw, struck the old witch, and at once both he and the hag were transformed into stone. All three are still to be seen—the white cow, the hag, and the fisherman—in stone.

Formerly when any great event was about to happen the cow used to emerge from the lake and walk round the island; but a long period has now elapsed since she was last seen. From this magical cow it is stated that the island takes its name Inisbofin, *i.e.*, the island of the white cow.

According to Cormac's Glossary the Fé, or magical wand, was made of aspen, an unlucky tree, and the wand was of such a purely pagan character that in Christian times it could be kept only in "the cemeteries of the heathen." It had sometimes symbols, in ogham, cut upon it, and baleful effect was supposed to be wrought by striking with it whatever was an object of detestation to the striker. This is a clear explanation of the wands described in present day popular folk lore as carried by hags, witches, and magicians, and it takes us back to a period when paganism still existed in Ireland.

A wand, formed of different material, appears to have been also used for healing purposes, for in a medical MS. of the year 1509 it is recommended, as a cure for a man rendered impotent by magic, to cut the patient's name in ogham on an elm wand, and to therewith strike the sufferer.

The connection between these Druidical wands (*Slatnan Druidheacht*) and that strange survival, the divining-rod, is not easy to define, yet it may be taken for certain that the superstition attached to them is, in both cases, cognate with the adoration of sacred trees, and that the idea underlying belief in the powers of both wands is the notion that they were animated by

some species of in-dwelling power—the spirit or qualities of the tree from which they were cut. It is strange that there are many people who may otherwise be styled fairly well educated, who still believe that a forked hazel stick, about eighteen inches in length, shaped like the letter Y, in the hands of a specially endowed person, possesses the magical power of revealing the mineralogical secrets of mother earth, and the faculty of discovering unsuspected springs of water. The diviner grasps the prongs firmly between the thumbs and two first fingers of each hand, the straight part held downward. He then walks over the ground where minerals or water are being sought for. As he approaches a hidden lode or spring the divining rod commences to rise—apparently without collusion on his part. When he arrives directly over the lode or spring it will complete a half turn upwards, breaking or bending the twigs forming the fork held between his fingers, until the straight part of the divining rod is uppermost. The quality and copiousness of the lode or the water supply is to be judged by the force with which the rod is repelled upwards from it. A writer remarks that, "the phenomena of the divining rod and 'table turning' are of precisely the same character, and both are referable to an involuntary muscular action resulting from fixedness of idea."

Mr. R. A. S. Macalister states that by the strange title of "Gates of Glory," the older generation of inhabitants of Corkaguiney, in Kerry, describes two standing-stones, situated in a field on the right-hand side of the road leading from Dingle to Ventry (fig. 57.) The meaning of the quaint appellation is at present undecipherable, but is most probably an allusion to the resemblance of the stones to a pair of gate-posts, as they stand some five feet apart. One of the stones is upwards of seven feet in height, the other is slightly smaller; both are triangular in section and taper to a point.

Some standing-stones were used by the peasantry for purposes of divination. In the townland of Farranglogh, county Meath, are two remarkable pillar-stones from whence the locality derives its name. These are called "the speaking-stones," and were formerly consulted in cases where either man or beast had been "overlooked" by the "good people." At these shrines it was forbidden to ask the same question twice, and this condition having been broken by some unbelieving or forgetful inquirers, the "speaking-stones" have since become voiceless. They had been infallible in breaking the spells of the fairies, in curing the effects of the evil eye, and they named, with unerring accuracy, the individual, or individuals, by whom malicious acts were perpetrated. Were cattle or other valuables stolen or lost, the directions given by the stones were certain to lead to the recovery of

the missing property, but alas, evil-disposed persons in the district may now act with impunity, the stones are dumb!

Mr. and Mrs. Hall state that between Dungarvan and Kilmacthomas, in a glen at a short distance from the road, is a large insulated rock, called by the country people Cloughlourish, of which they tell the following legend:—"At some period, by them undetermined, a dispute arose between two gossips, a thing in that part of Ireland formerly of rare occurrence, as they considered the affinity of sponsorship bound them more closely together, than even the closest ties of consanguinity, so that it

FIG. 57.

"The Gates of Glory." Standing-stones near the road leading to Ventry. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

would be considered a more heinous crime to wrong a gossip than a father or a brother. This dispute arose out of the accusation of a man, for some base purpose, that his female gossip had been unfaithful to her husband. There are no people on earth more tender of female honour than the Irish, and the slightest imputation subjects the unfortunate accused to the lowest degradation, neglect, and banishment. It was usual, in such cases, to refer to the priest of the parish: he, being supposed to have a greater knowledge of local affairs than any other person, would best judge of the character both of the accuser and the accused,

and have no by-interest to serve that would hinder him from giving a fair and impartial judgment on the point referred to his decision. In this instance, the woman bore untarnished fame. Early in the morning all the parties assembled, attended by their friends and relatives, and set off for the chapel, where the cause was to be examined before the altar, it being considered impossible that any person would there pronounce a lie. Nothing particular occurred until the party arrived at the stone, where some altercation ensued between the accuser and the husband of the accused, when the former, falling upon his knees, called upon the stone to bear witness to the truth of his allegation. At the moment, a loud crash was heard, the earth shook, and the stone was rent from its summit to its base, while the words were distinctly spoken from the cleft in the rock, '*Asminic een eirin a shoriv*,' which is Englished by 'The truth is bitter sometimes.' (See page 280.) And it is a common saying, when a doubt hangs over any allegation made to the prejudice of a person, '*Asminic een eirin a shoriv, arsa Cloughlourish a taloubh*': 'The truth is bitter sometimes, says the stone speaking in the earth.'"

There can be but little doubt that Clogher, in the county Tyrone, like many other places in Ireland, anciently possessed some remarkable stones, gifted by the credulous with linguistic powers. According to legend, a hero of antiquity, Connor Mac Nessa, consulted the oracle at Clogher. He was told to proceed to the Isle of Man, and there get a noted caird, or artificer, to make for him a sword, spear, and shield, and the supernatural power possessed by them would be instrumental in gaining him the sovereignty of Ulster. It is needless to add, that the prediction of the oracle proved true.

In the Island of Guernsey, there is a Cromleac styled "La Roche qui sonne," *i.e.* the stone that rings, probably on account of its emitting a ringing sound when struck. This title may be easily paraphrased into "the speaking stone." In somewhat the same fashion, the celebrated statue of Memnon, when first warmed by the rays of the rising sun, is stated to have emitted vocal sounds :—

> "As Memnon's marble harp, renowned of old,
> By fabling Nilus, to the quivering touch
> Of Titan's rays, with each responsive string
> Consenting, sounding through the air
> Unbidden strains."

In pre-Christian times, on the Continent, statues supposed to be gifted with human voices were not uncommon.

A magical stone at Altagore, county Antrim, is styled *Shanven*, *i.e.* "the old woman;" the owner kept it in his garden,

and food was always left on it for the "Grogan," as a fairy is designated, in the north of Ireland, as already stated. The food consisted of butter and oatmeal cakes: this, it is needless to say, disappeared during the night. A mason once took this stone, not knowing it to be enchanted, and built it into a gate pier; next morning, however, it was found back in its original position.

With regard to offerings of food, there is a very strange custom practised on Twelfth Day, and apparently of pagan origin. On the eve of this day a large loaf, baked some days previously, and called the "Christmas loaf," is laid, with great solemnity, on the table. The doors and windows are then closed, and one of the family, generally the housewife, takes up the loaf, and pounding it against the barred door and windows, repeats three times, in Irish, the following lines:—

> "We warn famine to retire,
> To the country of the Turks,
> Form this night to this night twelvemonth,
> And even this very night."

The introduction of "the Country of the Turks" is evidently a very modern substitution for some more ancient phrase.

There are *fear-gorta*, or "hungry man" stones, upon which, if you unwittingly tread, or touch in any way, you are instantly seized with an unappeasable hunger which is fatal if not at once satisfied. Should you climb the mountains with a peasant, and finding some particularly green and sheltered spot, propose to rest, he will appear frightened, make some excuse, hurry you away and conduct you to another place. He will then inform you that the first locality was covered with "hungry grass," and that staying there would have been fatal to both.

W. H. Maxwell, writing at the commencement of the nineteenth century, remarks that this mysterious disorder is in reality nothing but simple exhaustion, consequent upon hunger and fatigue. "The lower classes are particularly liable to this attack. They eat but seldom, and at irregular seasons; and commonly labour for many hours before they break their fast. Want of food produces faintness and exhaustion; and a supernatural cause is sought for a simple malady, which is only the natural consequence of dyspepsia and an empty stomach. One would imagine that the specific for 'faragurta' would at once point out its origin. Bread, or even a few grains of corn, are believed to cure it instantly; but any kind of food is equally efficacious. 'I have seen,' said my kinsman, 'many persons attacked by faragurta, and have myself been patient and physician. Some years ago, a fine active boy, called *Emineein* (synonymous to

Neddy), commonly attended me to the moors, and one day he was suddenly taken ill in the very wildest part of the hills. He lost all power of limb and lay down upon the heath unable to proceed a step. We had no grain of any kind to administer, and in this emergency tried that universal panacea, a glass of whiskey. After he had swallowed the cordial, the boy rather got worse than better, and we were obliged to carry him to the still-house at nearly two miles distance. On our arrival, fortunately for Emineein, we found the operators collected round a skibb (a basket) of potatoes. After eating one or two, the patient was able to join the party, and next morning proceeded stoutly home. In my own case, the predisposing cause was no enigma. I had been one of a knot of fox-hunters who, on the preceding night, had indulged in a desperate jollification. Finding a disinclination for breakfast, I repaired, contrary to my habit, without it to the mountains. I had exercised severely for several hours, when at once I became helpless as an infant, and sank upon a bank incapable of motion. My pony and some food were speedily obtained, and the faragurta banished. But, assuredly, if unassisted, I must have lain upon the heath, for I could not make the slightest exertion to get forward.' "

Holed-stones, which may, in most instances, be regarded as pillar-stones, are found in Ireland; they occur also in Scotland, England, and France, and from thence can be traced to India. It is stated, that in India the perforations are used by devotees, as a means of obtaining forgiveness of sins, or for regeneration; if the hole is large enough, the suppliant creeps through, but if it be small the hand alone is passed through.

A curious religious ceremony is depicted in fig. 58. "Here we see a well-known South Indian Missionary, endeavouring vainly to struggle through a small hole in a big stone slab. This slab is at the top of a hill, about three miles from Kollegor. The Hindus actually squeeze themselves through this hole, in order to acquire for themselves merit and the favour of the gods. Now it is obvious that this squeezing is a painful business, and clearly it is impossible for our missionary to get through the opening in the 'penance stone.' "

In the original use of the large apertures they seem to have been a literal, as well as a symbolic means, whereby an ailment, disease, or sin, might be left behind, or got rid of; they were also symbols by which a compact could be ratified, or an oath taken, by a well known and public act. The postulants, at first probably crawled through the orifice; then when it, through change in custom, became diminished in size, they probably passed a hand, or if a compact was to be made, clasped hands

through it. The act of a bride passing her finger through her wedding ring may be but a survival of the ceremony, when the woman would have had to crawl through an aperture in a sacred stone. In one place in England, this observance, it is stated, still occasionally occurs, *i.e.* at "St. Wilfred's Needle," in the crypt of Ripon Minister.

FIG. 58.

"Holed-stone" near Kollegor, India. Photo from *Strand Magazine.*

Some of the sacred stones dedicated to early British female saints were peculiarly sensitive of evil. Howden was honoured with a powerful patron-lady, St. Osuna, who evidently possessed a keen sense of humour. "The rector of the parish kept household with a north-country damsel after a fashion which St. Osuna was determined to reprove at the earliest opportunity. This occasion presented itself when the rector's arch-hussey one day came to church. The saint's tomb was there, projecting from the wall like a wooden seat. The reverend gentleman's 'lady,' out of contempt, or fatigue, sat down thereon, and she

never forgot it. She was unable to get up again. Her cry for help brought a host of villagers to her aid; and if they at last pulled her away it was not through their strength, but because St. Osuna chose to let her go, after the flaunting minx had sworn she was sorry for the past and had promised amendment for the future. But, even then, St. Osuna did not let her loose from the seat the girl had sacrilegiously assumed, without making her leave a token behind her, which consisted of something more than fragments of the wench's dress. No Howden lass, after that, cared to hear any reference being made to sitting on St. Osuna's bench."

An instance where substantial gains attendant on the ritual of creeping through a holed-stone were early annexed by the Church is that of St. Michael-la-Rivière, in the diocese of Bordeaux. A similar practice obtained wherever, in the diocese, was a church dedicated to St. Michael. In the seventeenth century the results, both in honour and gain, were considerable, if we may judge by the bitter quarrels arising between churchmen connected with the localities. In the church of St. Michael-la-Rivière the sick man was required to pass through a hole at the end of the apse, after which he left offerings to the church according to his worldly means. A similar observance was retained in the Walloon Church of Nivelle, where there was a crypt. Between the wall and a pillar, close by, was a hole through which, as the people believed, no one in a state of mortal sin could pass. In a North German example the object of veneration was an aged and time worn oak, where the postulant, after creeping, in the prescribed manner, through a hole in the decaying trunk, completed the rite by burying a silver coin in the ground under the roots of the tree. At one time as many as a hundred sick folk are said to have visited it daily. In this instance the Church had sadly neglected her opportunities.

A most remarkable stone, which was undoubtedly, in olden time, used for the carrying out of some pagan rite, marks the point of junction of the three parishes of the district formerly, and still by the country people, designated Cuilirra, near the town of Sligo. In the Brehon *Law Tracts*, vol. iv., p. 143, a monument of this class is called "a stone mark," *i.e.* a district which is marked by a stone of worship or an immovable stone. It is a thin limestone flag set on edge; it measures ten feet in breadth by nine feet in height above ground. The little stream which issues from Tobernavean, *i. e.* the "Well of the Warriors," laves its base. Towards the east side the flagstone is pierced by an oblong perforation three feet in length by two feet in breadth (fig. 59). A very old person, formerly living in the vicinity, but now long dead, stated to the writer that

children suffering from measles and other infant maladies were passed through the aperture for a cure. From its mottled appearance this slab is called in Irish the "speckled" and also the "grey stone." (See *Frontispiece.*)

Without doubt most, if not indeed all of the "holed" and "bulláned" upright stones, as also the same class of crosses, were originally pagan pillar stones, which, owing to their hold on the primitive mind, were consecrated to the new worship, and still

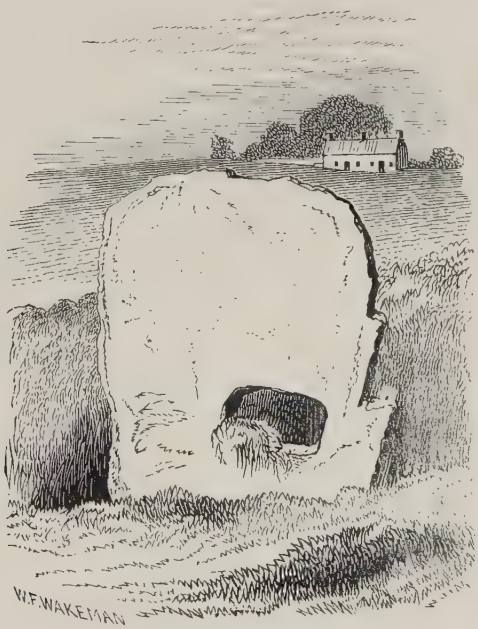

Fig. 59.

"Holed-stone," called *Clochbhreac,* "the Speckled Stone," and *Clochlia,* or "the Gray Stone," at Tobernavean, Woodville, near Sligo.
Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

assert a powerful influence on the imagination of the peasant despite 1500 years of Christian effort. The early missionaries were diplomatic, tolerated their use, and made the most they could of their converts; converts resembling those made in our day; time-servers, changing belief, in many instances, for the sake of worldly gain, who did not give up all their old heathen ideas and customs, but accommodated themselves to the fashion of the day, by bringing a good deal of the old order into the new, of

which the most marked survivals are, undoubtedly, the superstitions still existing regarding stone worship.

It is difficult to believe that the perforations in rude pillar-stones, and in those bearing Christian symbols could possibly have been derived from any point of belief or ceremonial of the Christian Church.

In a field situated in the parish of Aghade, county Carlow, there is a "holed-stone," called Cloch-a-Phoill. It projects, in a semi-recumbent position, seven feet six inches above ground, is five feet eight inches in width, one foot six inches in its thickest part, and it is pierced, nearly equally distant from the sides and top, with a round hole eleven and a-half inches in diameter. Formerly children were passed through this aperture either as as a cure for or a preventive against the malady called rickets.*

Near St. Madron's Well,† in Cornwall, there is a block of

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* There is still a tradition amongst the country people that a son of one of the Irish kings was chained to this stone, but that he contrived to break his chains and escape. One of the contributors to the Ordnance Survey Reports, and who evidently had a firm and unshaken belief in ancient tradition, states: —"There are marks left, caused by the friction of the iron on the stone. We would at once conclude that it was a bull, or some other animal, that was chained here, and not a human being, were not the tradition confirmed by written history, the verity of which we are not disposed to contradict." This is a reference to a legend in the Book of Ballymote (fol. 77, p. b, col. b), in which this stone is mentioned, as well as the name of the district (now parish) in which it is situated, *i.e.* Athfada (Aghada), the long ford. The following is a literal translation, as taken from the Ordnance Survey correspondence :—

"The punishment of Eochaidh, son of Enna Cennsealach (King of Leinster). Eochaidh, the son of Enna Censealach, on a time repaired to the south to his own country. He determined on going to the house of the poet of Niall of the Nine Hostages, to ask for victualls, *i.e.* to the house of Laidginn, son of Baircead, who was Niall's poet. The youth was refused entertainment in the poet's house. He returned back again from the south, and burned—after being as a hostage from his father in the hands of Niall of the Nine Hostages—the poet's residence, and killed his only son. The poet, for a full year after that, continued to satirize the Lagenians, and bring fatalities on them, so that neither corn, grass, or foliage grew unto them to the end of a year.

"Niall made an expedition to the Lagenians, and vowed that he should not depart from them until Eochaidh should be given up as a hostage, and they were compelled so to do. And he was carried to Athfadat, in Fothartaibh Fea, on the banks of the Slaine, where he was left after them with a chain round his neck, and the end of the chain through a perforated rock. Then there came to him nine champions of the champions of Niall, for the purpose of killing him.

"'Bad, indeed,' said he, and at the same time he gave a sudden jerk, by which he broke the chain. He then took up the iron bar that passed through the chain (at the other side of the stone), and faced them. He so well plied the iron bar against them that he killed the nine. The men (*i.e.* the Hy Niall) retreat before him to the Tulach (now Tullow), the Lagenians press after, slaughtering them, until they had left the country."

† "Mr. R. C. Hope, in his 'Holy Wells,' refers to a block of stone near St. Madron's Spring, in Cornwall, locally known as St. Madron's Bed. We

granite called the "creeping stone," pierced in the centre by a hole. Through this aperture sickly children were formerly passed, in the belief that the ceremony would effect a cure.

If a man crawls through the hole in the centre of the Maen-an-Toll, muttering a certain incantation, he will ever afterwards

FIG. 60.

"Holed-stone." The Maen - an - Toll, Cornwall. Photo. by Frith & Co., Reigate.

be free from rheumatism, while babies will be freed from spinal complaints, if passed through the hole (fig. 60).

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are told that 'on it impotent folk reclined when they came to try the cold water cure.' In the same parish is a pre-historic relic in the form of a granite block with a hole in the centre of it. It is known in Cornish as Mean-an-Tol, *i.e.*, the Stone of the Hole. Its name in English is 'The Creeping Stone.' Sickly children were at one time passed through the hole a certain number of times in the belief that a cure would follow. This superstitious custom recalls what was at one time done beside St. Paul's Well, in the parish of Fyvie, Aberdeenshire. Close to the well were the ruins of an old church. One of its stones was supported on other two with a space below. It went by the name of 'The Shargar Stone,' *shargar* signifying 'a weakly child.' The stone, in this instance, got its name from the custom in the district of mothers passing their ailing children through the space below the stone, in the belief that whatever hindered their growth would thereby be removed."—*Folklore of Scottish Lochs and Springs*, James M. MacKinlay, M.A., pp. 80, 81.

In the parish of Fyvie, in Aberdeenshire, close to St. Paul's Well, there was a large stone supported on two others, thus leaving a space between it and the ground. Through this space ailing children were passed, in the belief that the sickness, from which they were suffering, would be removed.

At Minchen Hampton, in Gloucestershire, there is a holed stone, called the "Long Stone." At its lower end is a perforation, through which children used to be passed for cure, or prevention of measles, whooping cough, and other infantile ailments.

Fig. 61.

"Holed-stone"—Luristan, Persia, on the grave of a valiant warrior—through which cowards are passed to cure them of cowardice.
From a photo. from *The Wide World Magazine.*

Fig. 61 is the reproduction of a photograph taken during Mrs. Bishop's journey in Upper Elam, in Luristan, Persia. It depicts a native of the country on horseback, and a rude representation of a stone lion erected on the grave of a warrior. Mrs. Baker states that amongst these people "cowardice is treated as a disease, and in those cases in which fervent prayers fail to cure the sufferer, he is taken out on the night of a full moon to the tomb of a valiant man—denoted as such by one of

these stone lions on his grave—and the inveterate coward is made to pass seven times under the lion's body."

The special artist of the *Graphic*, Mr. W. T. Maud, writing from the Atbara Camp, during the advance of the Egyptian army on Khartoum, in 1898, says that:—"The natives look upon the engine as a sort of god, and stand in awe of it. The sapper officers who built the line, have many amusing yarns to tell about their reception when first the locomotive came along. At Gennanetti, an Arab approached the officer in charge, and asked him if his wife might creep under the engine. The reason for this extraordinary request, was that the lady was anxious to have a child, so permission was at once given. Not content with crawling under the engine once, she asked if she might do it again, and her husband explained that this would ensure her having twins."

A custom which prevailed at Ardmore, county Waterford, greatly resembles this Eastern rite, as in this instance there is no aperture in the stone, the passage being underneath, between it and the rock upon which it rests. The *Cloch-Nave-Deglane* lies amongst the boulders on the strand at Ardmore (fig. 62). The pilgrims, after performing their rounds, squeezed themselves under it three times. This stone is noted for cures, especially for pains in the back. It is a belief that no one with borrowed or stolen clothes can pass unharmed under it. This is the rock which navigated itself on the surface of the sea from Rome (see vol. i., p. 217). St. Brendan ran his "ship" (a huge rock) ashore off the Donegal coast. Near Kilnamarbhe, on Scattery Island, there is a graveyard half washed away by the sea, and on the beach lies the large stone slab on which St. Cannara sailed about.

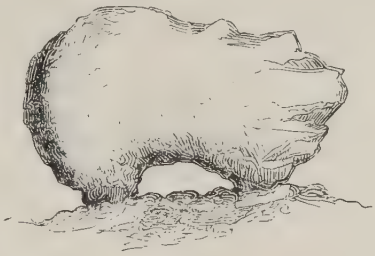

FIG. 62.

The *Cloch-Nave-Deglane*, or "St. Declan's Sacred Stone," at Ardmore, under which pilgrims squeeze themselves. From Mr. and Mrs. Hall's *Ireland*.

In the year 1833, a writer thus describes the rites as seen by him at the stone of St. Declan:—"Devotion had commenced at the stone previous to my arrival. But it is only at low water that the people can go under the stone to perform these devotions there. They must always take advantage of the tide. On the Saint's day (22nd December) it is always necessary to remove some of the sand which accumulates under the stone, to make a

sufficient passage for a large man or woman, as the little rocks on which the stone rests, form irregular pillars, it is necessary to have the surface under the stone lower than the front or rere."

"In order to begin here, the men take off hats, coats, shoes, and stockings, and if very large, waistcoats. They turn up their breeches above the knee, then lying flat on the ground, put in hands, arms, and head, one shoulder more forward than the other, in order to work their way through more easily, and coming out from under the stone on the other side (from front to rere perhaps is four feet), they rise on their knees and strike their backs three times against the stone, remove beads, repeat aves, etc. They then proceed on bare knees, over a number of little rocks to the place where they enter again under the stone, and thus proceed three times, which done, they wash their knees, dress and proceed to the well (*ante*, fig. 30, p. 96). The women take off bonnets, shoes, and stockings, and turn their petticoats up above the knee, so that they may go on bare knees. I saw but one woman who put her petticoat under her knees; a little boy took off his breeches. The women proceed in the same manner as the men, excepting indeed, that they appeared less careful of saving their knees from being hurt by the rocks than the men. I should have observed that the number of females who went under the stone could not have been in a greater proportion than one to ten men."

Near Durrow there is a singularly marked limestone flag, also famous for curing "pains in the back." The same idea, as is apparent in the habit of creeping under St. Declan's stone, under a railway engine, or through the "Lion-stone," is present in the apparently ridiculous custom of passing children, afflicted with the whooping cough, three times under an ass or a cow (see *ante*, p. 189).

Creeping through, or under certain objects, seems to have been considered, in later times, as efficacious as creeping under a sacred stone, or passing through a holed stone. For instance, if an Irish peasant, on Hallow Eve, creeps under the long trailing branches of the blackberry briar, he will have his wish granted, and be free from malign influence, but the words he must use, and the rites he must perform, are only known to the initiated.

Some, if not indeed all of these charms, date back to pagan times. The newly converted natives, merely substituted the names of the persons of the Trinity, or of distinguished Biblical, or Hibernian Saints, for their ancient gods and goddesses. No amount of argument will shake a peasant's faith in these ancient formulæ, for above all things, fervent faith is necessary, or the charm will not be efficacious.

Mr. T. F. T. Dyer, in *English Folk-Lore*, states that, "in Devonshire, a curious charm, consisting in creeping under an arched bramble, is used to cure blackhead or pinsoles, as they are sometimes called. A contributor to the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* (1877, vol. ix., p. 96) tells us that the person affected by this troublesome malady is to creep on hands and knees under or through a bramble three times with the sun; that is, from east to west. The bramble must be of peculiar growth; that is, it must form an arch, rooting at both ends, and if it reaches into two proprietors' lands, so much the better. Thus, if a bramble grows on the hedge of one owner, and a branch, of which the end takes root, extends into the field of another, the best form for working the charm is provided." There is, in Ireland, something sacred with regard to this, the blackberry briar. To dream you are passing through a thicket of these brambles, portends trouble; if they scratch or prick you, it is bad, but much worse if they draw blood.

In some rural districts in England a usage still exists in which a sapling is employed instead of the aperture in a stone. When a child is taken ill, it is brought before sunrise by a "wise woman" to a place where a young ash sapling grows. The child is undressed, the sapling is split towards its centre, the severed portions being held far enough asunder to allow the infant to be passed through by the "wise woman," while certain mysterious words are pronounced. The cut in the sapling is then carefully bound together, and plastered over with mud or clay. If the tree lives, the child will certainly recover, but if it dies, the disease from which the child suffers will prove incurable.

A case of passing a child through a cleft tree, as a curative process for physical ailment, was observed in the year 1888 in Rio Janeiro. Not long ago the practice was by no means uncommon in many parts of England, but in comparison with the observances in India there was a considerable difference, in India the process being regarded as spiritual, while in England it was exclusively corporeal. More than a century ago Cullen, in his *Antiquities of Hawstead*, writes:—"I may mention a custom which I have seen twice practised within a few years, namely, that of drawing a child through a cleft tree. For this purpose a young ash tree was each time selected, and split longitudinally about five feet. The fissure was kept wide open by my gardener, while the friend of the child, having first stript him, passed him thrice through it, always head foremost. As soon as the operation was performed the wounded tree was bound up with packthread, and as the bark healed the child was to recover. The first of these young patients was to be cured of the rickets, the second of a rupture. About the former," continues Cullen, "I

had no opportunity of making any inquiry, but I frequently saw the father of the latter who assured me that his child, without any other assistance, gradually mended, and at last grew perfectly well." Another writer says that when walking through a plantation with his bailiff he observed him rather minutely inspecting a young ash, and perceived that it had a straight seam or scar, three feet or more in length. On inquiry the bailiff told him that a child had been passed through the tree, split and opened for the purpose, to cure its rupture. "The tree is now as thick as one's wrist, and was not, when the ceremony was performed, above an inch in diameter. The impression is, that as the tree heals of its wound, so will the child's ailment be removed. Great confidence seems to be placed in the mysterious efficacy of the process."

A writer in the *Report and Transactions* of the Devonshire Association (vol. viii., p. 54) says:—"Passing lately through a wood at Spitchwich, near Ashburton, a remark on some peculiarity in an ash sapling led to the explanation from the gamekeeper that the tree had been instrumental in the cure of a ruptured infant, and he afterwards pointed out four or five others that had served the same good purpose. With evidently perfect faith in the story, he related that when a young infant is afflicted with rupture a small maiden ash is split for a length of five or six feet down the middle, as it stands growing in the wood, The split halves being forced asunder, the naked infant, squalling as becomes him, is passed three times in the same direction through the opening, and thenceforth the defect is cured. The tree is then restored to its natural shape and as it thrives so this child thrives. My informant instanced several well-known young men of the neighbourhood who had been subjected to the process in their babyhood, and had grown up strong and healthy. In one case in which the tree had evidently suffered from the experiment, he referred to the deformity and sickly growth of the youth who had been passed through it."

White, in his *Natural History of Selborne*, describes also, very fully, this practice:—"In a farmyard, near the middle of the village, stands, at this day, a row of pollard ashes, which, by the seams and long cicatrices down their sides, manifestly show that, in former times, they have been cleft asunder. These trees, when young and flexible, were severed and kept open by wedges, while ruptured children stripped naked were pushed through the apertures, under a persuasion that, by such a process, the poor babes would be cured of their infirmity. As soon as the operation was over, the tree, in the suffering part, was plastered with loam and carefully swathed up. If the parts coalesced and soldered together, as usually fell out when the feat was performed with any adroitness at all, the party was cured; but where the cleft

continued to gape, the operation, it was supposed, would prove ineffectual. Having occasion to enlarge my garden not long since, I cut down two or three such trees, one of which did not grow together."

In *Folk-Lore of Plants*, Mr. T. F. T. Dyer mentions that, "in Somersetshire, the superstition still lingers on; and in Cornwall the ceremony, to be of value, must be performed before sunrise; but the practice does not seem to have been confined to any special locality. It should also be added, as Mr. Conway has pointed out, that in Saxon countries, in the Middle Ages, a hole formed by two branches of a tree growing together was esteemed of highly efficacious value. . . . It is noteworthy also, that the Indian belief which describes the holes in trees as doors through which the special spirits of those trees pass, reappears in the German superstition, that the holes in the oak are the pathways for elves; and that various diseases may be cured by contact with these holes. Hence some trees are regarded with special veneration—particularly the lime and pine—and persons of a superstitious turn of mind 'may often be seen carrying sickly children to a forest for the purpose of dragging them through such holes.'"

The same belief and rite obtained in Scotland also. James Napier, F.R.S.E., quotes the following from the *Presbytery Records of Lanark, 1664*:—"Compiers Margaret Reid in the same parish (Carnwath) suspect of witchcraft, and confessed she put a woman newlie delivered, thrice through a green hulshe, for helping a grinding of the bellie; and that she carried a sick child thrice about one aikene port for curing of it." "Such means," continues Napier, "of curing diseases were practised within this century, and many things connected with the oak (and ash) were held potent as curatives."

In instances of the "holed-stone" class in Ireland the earliest perforations appear, as already stated, to have been the largest; they gradually dwindled down to such as would little more than admit a finger. These may be termed "secondary holed-stones." In connection with ecclesiastical buildings, instances occur in localities widely apart. Cross-inscribed holed-stones may, probably, have been so sculptured by the earliest missionaries amongst the Irish, with the object of thus diverting the prayers of the pagans into supposed Christian channels.

About a mile from the village of Doagh, county Antrim, stands a large slab called the "Holed-stone." It is upwards of five feet above ground. At a height of about three feet there is a round hole perforated through it large enough to admit an ordinary sized hand (fig. 63). Whatever other uses it may have been erected for, there can be little doubt, but that it was

Fig. 63.

"Secondary Holed-stone," near the village of Doagh, county Antrim, connected with aphrodisiac customs. From Welch's Irish Views.

connected with aphrodisiac customs. Marriage contracts are still ratified at this spot, as country couples go there to signify their betrothal clasping hands through the hole. It is said that not long ago a large stone, with a hole through it, stood on a hill near Cushendall in the same county. There is a stone of this class in the churchyard of Castledermot (fig. 64).

FIG. 64.
"Secondary Holed-stone" at Castledermot, called "The Swearing-stone," evidently formerly connected with aphrodisiac customs. From a Photo.

Lord Walter Fitz Gerald states that "this hole-stone stands at the head of a modern grave (belonging to a family named Abbott) on the south-east side of the churchyard; it is locally called 'the swearing-stone,' though the use it was formerly put to is now forgotten. It is of granite, a class of stone which abounds in this district.

"In the beginning of 1889, as the stone had, in course of

years, become greatly sunk in the ground, I had it raised, and found that just about half of it alone had been above ground. Before replacing it I had a bed of cement made for it, to prevent it again sinking, and at present only six inches of it are hid from view. The full length of the stone is 3 feet, its width 1 foot 2 in., and its thickness $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. The hole (as is shown in the photo) is at the junction of the arms of a raised cross, and is 5 in. in diameter. The back, or west side of the stone, is plain. There is a peculiar vein in the granite on this side, which runs down the middle of the stone (projecting from it) from top to the bottom."*

Another holed-stone is near the church of Kilmalkedar, about a mile from Smerwick Harbour, county Kerry.

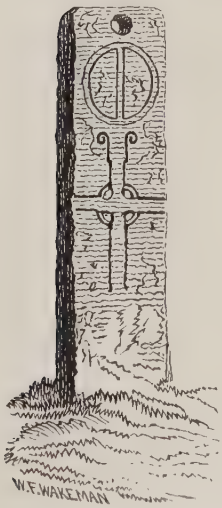

Fig. 65.

"Secondary Holed-stone," Mainister, Aran Island, connected with aphrodisiac customs. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland."

Fig. 66.

"Secondary Holed-stone." Weather-worn and mutilated Cross, at Layde, co. Antrim. Reproduced from the *Ulster Journal of Archæology*. (Second Series.)

On Aran Island there is a perforated stone inscribed with a curiously shaped cross (fig. 65). O'Donovan states that there were superstitious rites held in connection with it, but he does not specify their nature. According to a correspondent who lately visited the place: when women are sick their linen clothes are sometimes pulled through the hole. It seems to possess more of a sacred character to the peasantry than the other crosses on the Island. It stands about five feet above the soil, the ornamentation under the perforation seems to partake of the characteristics of a *crux ansata*.

Fig. 66 is from a sketch by Mr. W. J. Fennell, of a weather-worn and much mutilated cross of red sandstone in the old

* As pointed out by Lord Walter Fitz Gerald, an erroneous description and illustration of this stone appeared in General Vallancey's *Collect. de rebus Hiber.*, 1804; in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1864; in Marcus Keane's *Towers and Temples of Ancient Ireland*; in Waring's *Stone Monuments*; in the *Dublin Penny Journal*, 1832; and lastly, in the author's *Rude Stone Monuments of Ireland*, p. 104, fig. 84, taken from the engraving in the *Dublin Penny Journal*.

Fig. 67.

"Secondary Holed-stone," at Glencolumbkill, connected with aphrodisiac customs.
From Welch's Irish Views.

graveyard of Layde in the county Antrim. It appears to have been quite lately replanted in an upright position, as on it is a newly cut inscription to a person but recently deceased. No legend regarding it could be gathered.

The holed-stone, at Glencolumbkill, county Donegal, is the most venerated of all the crosses at this station. At it women pray for children. The large block of white quartz, to the right of the cross, is to be noted (fig. 67). The presence of this material forms a characteristic feature at most ancient stations, holy wells, pagan sepulchres, and indeed at many modern pagan religious sites all the world over (see *ante*, vol. i., pages 329–331). There are holed-stones at Killbary, on the Shannon, at Devenish (close to a saint's "Bed"), in Lough Erne (fig. 68) (attention is drawn to the manner in which the stone is pierced), and at Inishmurray, off the Sligo coast. The two holed-stones on this island are styled by the natives "praying stones." The perforations are not similar to any described as occurring elsewhere in Ireland. One face of the slab is perforated near the edge by two holes of a size sufficient to admit only the insertion of a thumb, and the orifices extend through the stone and open out at the sides into apertures cut to receive the fingers of the hand. One pillar-stone stands on the southern side of the "Church of the Men" (fig. 69), and the other near the "Church of the Women" (fig. 70). Both monuments are cross-inscribed, one of them on its western, the other on its eastern, face. Near the pillar-stone, at the "Church of the Men," is a second slab, but unperforated. Women about to add to the number of the inhabitants of the island offer up prayers for their safe recovery before these two "perforated stones." By placing the fingers in the side and their thumbs in the front holes, they are enabled to rise with more ease from their kneeling position. The prayers thus offered up appear to be efficacious, no deaths taking place on the island under these circumstances.

Fig. 68.

"Secondary Holed-stone," Devenish, Lough Erne," connected with aphrodisiac customs. From a sketch by W. F. Wakeman.

At the holed-stone of Clocnapeacaib, county Cork, women were in the habit of drawing some of their clothes through a hole, when their confinement was approaching, to secure a favourable result, and a similar practice is followed in many other localities of women similarly situated drawing clothes through the perforated arms of ancient Irish circular-headed stone crosses.

According to John Knott, M.D., the great cross near the

ruins of the famous monastery of Clonmacnoise possesses a peculiar power in the domain of healing, for if a man spans it with his arms, and is able to make his finger-tips meet, the application of the palms of his hands to the abdomen of his wife will bring immediate relief in dystocia.

FIG. 69.

"Secondary Holed-stone," at "The Church of the Men," Island of Inishmurray, connected with aphrodisiac customs. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

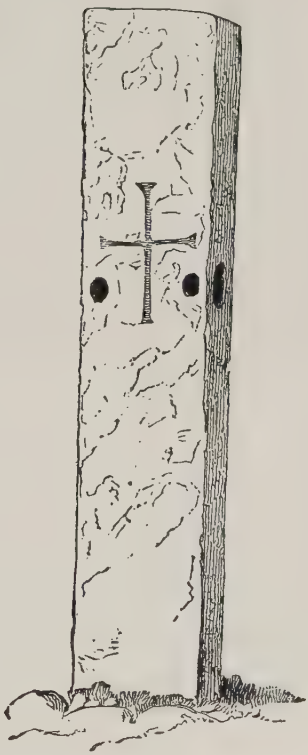

FIG. 70.

"Secondary Holed-stone," near "The Church of the Women," Island of Inishmurray, connected with aphrodisiac customs. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

Another famous stone at Ardmore has been buried, probably for the purpose of putting an end to its attendant ceremonies. It must also be classed among relics connected with rites of days long gone by. It was called the "Cloch-Daha," which is said to signify "the stone of Daghdha." It was about two feet long by

eighteen inches in breadth, and the same in depth, hollowed into an oval trough-like shape, probably an old pagan bullán or rock-basin. Its centre was pierced by a hole, in which, on Ash Wednesday, the young unmarried men of the village inserted a wattle, on the top of which they tied a quantity of tow. They then brought with them all the unmarried maidens they could muster from the village and vicinity, and made them dance round the "Cloch-Daha," holding the pendant tow, and spinning it whilst dancing. The ceremony terminated by the young men dragging the maidens through the village seated on logs of wood.

Fig. 71.

"Secondary Holed-stone," formerly at Stennis, near Kirkwall, Orkney, connected with aphrodisiac customs. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

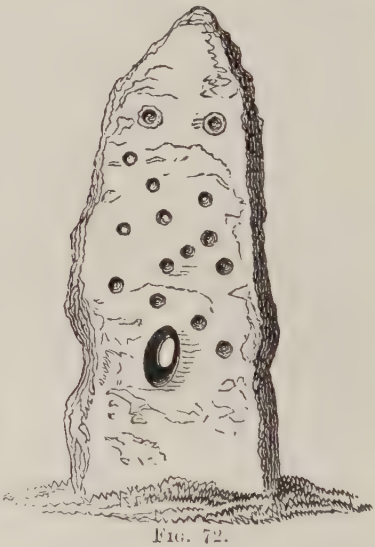

Fig. 72.

"Secondary Holed-stone," at Lochgilphead, Argyllshire. From the *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

At the foot of the round tower near Inniskeen, a small village in the county Monaghan, there was a large stone of porphyry with a hole in the centre, large enough to thrust the arm through. It was once used for superstitious purposes; in more modern times a pole was placed in the hole, up which the country people used to climb at Easter for prizes.

Near Kirkwall, Orkney, at a place called Stennis, there was a large pillar-stone with a hole through it (fig. 71). The site on which it stood was deemed a place consecrated to the meeting of

Fig. 73.

Cross, with bullán on either side, connected with aphrodisiac customs.
From Welch's Irish Views.

Fig. 74.—"The Witches' Stone," a bullán near Antrim Round Tower. From Welch's Irish Views.

lovers, and when they joined hands through the stone, the pledge of love and truth then given was held sacred. In his tale of *The Pirate*, the stone circle of Stennis is specially mentioned by Sir Walter Scott, who was himself an antiquary as well as a novelist. The oath to the old Scandinavian gods was sworn by persons joining hands through the hole in this stone, and the ceremony was held sacred, even amongst modern Christians.

There is a "secondary holed stone" at Lochgilphead in Argyllshire represented by fig. 72 from the *Sculptured Stones of Scotland;* no description of it, however, could be found in the text; it is not merely "holed" but also "cup-marked," and its position is close to an apparently sepulchral stone circle. A slab that may have been intended for a "holed-stone" was found by Mr. Eugene A. Conwell in his examination of the ancient sepulchral carns on the Loughcrew hills, county Meath, also in connexion with a stone circle. It is thus described by him :—"No. 8 contains a circular hole 6½ inches in diameter, cut vertically, with much precision and smoothness, to a depth of 3 inches. For what use this may have been intended it would be difficult to conjecture, if we do not suppose that this stone itself had been unfinished, or not completely pierced through."

It is quite possible that this may be merely a bullán.

The cross at Boho, near Enniskillen, has a bullán at either side of the base. Men are reported to resort to this stone in cases where they have no children after marriage (fig. 73).

"The Witches' stone," near Antrim Round Tower, from its name evidently originally a cursing site, is a rock bullán. The tower, according to current tradition, was erected by a "hag" who, when it was finished, as the readiest way of descending, took a flying leap and alighted on this stone, situated about 120 yards from the base of the structure. She stumbled—little wonder—on landing, and struck the rock with one elbow and one knee, which accounts for the cup-like depressions seen in the illustration (fig. 74). These, as is usual, are stated never to be without water. The largest cavity is 15 inches long, 12 inches wide and 9 inches deep; the smaller depression is 6 inches wide by 3 inches in depth. The rock itself is 6 feet long by about 4½ feet broad. It lay originally by the side of a brook, but many years ago the stream was diverted, a wall was built between it and the stream, and the enclosed area converted into a garden.

In the graveyard of Kilchouslan, on the northern shore of Campbelltown Bay, Kintyre, there was a flat, circular shaped stone, the centre pierced with a hole, large enough to permit of the hand being passed through. According to tradition, if a couple, who had eloped, joined hands through this aperture, they were regarded as lawfully married, and beyond pursuit.

There are two holed-stones at Bolleit, figured in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for the year 1864. One was then employed for the utilitarian purpose of a gate-post. There was a third holed-stone not far distant. The apertures in these average but six inches in diameter.

Fig. 75 represents stone rings, which have been lying for ages in the churchyard of Kirk Braddan, in the Isle of Man. In times gone by, it was the custom for the brides and bridegrooms during the wedding ceremony to clasp hands through the holes in the stones, but though this ancient Manx custom has fallen into desuetude, these old waifs of antiquity remain ready for use by any bewildered bridegroom, who may have forgotten to bring the ring for his bride.

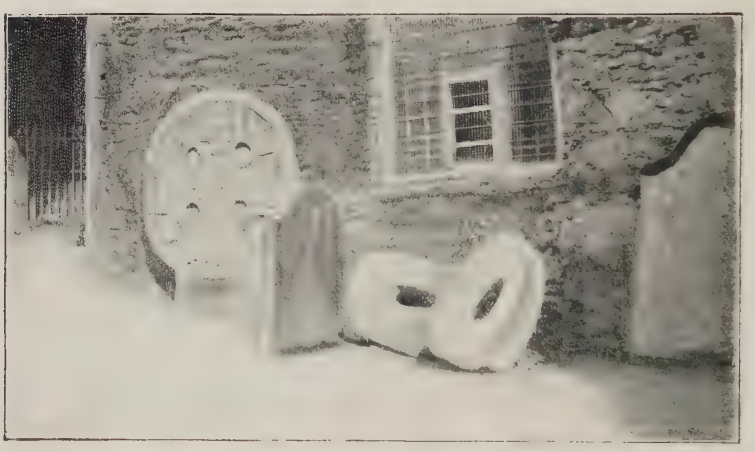

Fig. 75.

"Secondary Holed-stones," connected with aphrodisiac customs. Extraordinary Stone Wedding Rings, in the Churchyard of Kirk Braddan, Isle of Man. From a Photo. by Mr. H. Knowles, Great Harwood.

An inscribed stone, bearing upon it a Latin, and a more recent Arabic inscription, is situated at Chila, near Rabat, in northern Africa. It acts as a sort of confessional stone, and is supposed to possess miraculous powers. Women who seek to obtain forgiveness of their sins, place their hands in the hole, which is in the centre of the stone (fig. 76).

"Holed-stones" forming portion of pre-historic sepulchral monuments have not hitherto been found in Ireland, but are by no means of rare occurrence in Great Britain, on the Continent, and throughout the East, where, particularly in India, they are very numerous. Colonel Meadows Taylor, in his account of the

Fig. 76.

A Roman "Secondary Holed-stone," with Arabic inscription, at Chela, near Rabat. The woman is inserting her hand in the stone to gain forgiveness of her sins. Reproduced from *The Graphic*.

sepulchral monuments of the Deccan, describes one "holed dolmen" as having a top slab 12 feet by 10 feet 6 inches, and 1 foot thick, the side slabs being upwards of 12 feet broad by about 9 inches thick (fig. 77). The apertures—almost invariably on the south side—appear, however, to have been left more for facilitating the supply of food, or other offerings to the manes of the departed, as well as to allow free exit and entrance to the spirit inhabiting the tomb, than for any of the purposes to which "holed-stones" in Ireland were dedicated.

Rude boulders, placed in parallel lines, extending from a few yards to even miles in length, have been found in Great Britain and on the Continent (fig. 52). These arrangements of stones have been styled "alignments," "avenues," and by a variety of learned names. No alignment, it is thought, has yet been discovered in Ireland. One antiquary found distinct traces of several in the county Sligo. These extended for a considerable

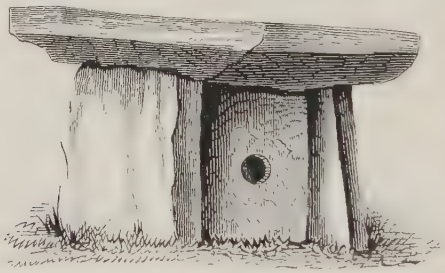

Fig. 77.

"Holed Dolmen," or sepulchral monument, at Rujunkolloor, in the Deccan. After Colonel Meadows Taylor. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

distance. Unfortunately, however, for the theory, the country people recollected the demolition of stone fences in the locality; and it was the traces of their foundations that represented the supposed Druidical remains. It must be said, however, that W. F. Wakeman—a reliable authority—claims to have discovered alignments of stones, at Cavancarragh, in the county Fermanagh (fig. 78). At the same time this writer states that, "it is not too much to assert that works of this kind, even from the days of Stukeley, have presented the most difficult problem, which it has been the task of many British and foreign antiquaries to solve. Hitherto, we have had little beyond conjecture referring to their uses. They seem like galleries that lead to nothing; tombs, temples, or processional avenues they could not have been, yet their construction affords unmistakable evidence of organised labour and deliberate design."

Some curiously shaped masses of rock have been named by antiquaries "Druids' Chairs," "Brehons' Chairs," and "Inauguration Chairs," according as it was imagined that they had been used by the Druids when giving instruction, by the Brehons when laying down the law, or by chiefs when being installed in office. A good example of this latter class is a chair-like block of common whinstone, seemingly a freak of nature, for it is evidently unchiselled. The seat is lower than that of an ordinary chair; the back being more high and narrow. This chair was stated to have been, during a long period, the seat on which the O'Neills of Castlereagh, near Belfast (fig. 79), were

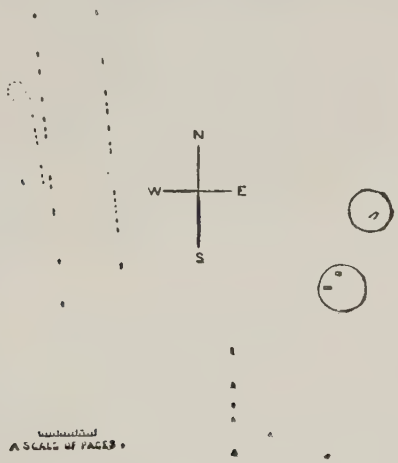

Fig. 78.

Plan of Alignments of Stones and Carns at Cavancarragh.
Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

inaugurated. On the downfall of that family, in the reign of James I., the chair was overturned, and so remained until the year 1750, at which time the sovereign—as the mayor was then designated—of Belfast caused it to be removed to the Butter Market. On the demolition of the old market-place the chair, mixed up with other *débris*, was about to be broken up, when it was rescued, purchased, and used as a garden seat by a gentleman of antiquarian tastes in the county Sligo. It has lately been sold by the purchaser's grandson, and is now back again in Belfast.

Facing northward, and set about four feet inwards from the circumference of one of the largest and most conspicuous carns which crown the summits of the Loughcrew Hills, there is a huge

boulder, weighing about ten tons, and popularly called, "the Hag's Chair" (fig. 80). The name is derived from Vera, the celebrated goddess, sorceress, or hag, of ancient days. The legend current in the neighbourhood, is to the effect that she came one time from the North to perform a magical feat in the neighbourhood,

Fig. 79.

Chair-like block of whinstone, on which the O'Neills of Castlereagh, near Belfast, were, it is alleged, inaugurated.
Reproduced from the present *Ulster Journal of Archæology*. Welch's Irish Views.

by which she was to obtain great power if she succeeded. She took an apron full of stones, and dropped a carn on Carnbane; from this she jumped to the summit of Slieve-na-cally, or Hag's Hill, a mile distant, and dropped a second carn there; from thence she made a jump, and dropped a carn on another hill,

about a mile distant. If she could make another leap, and drop the fourth carn, it appears the magical feat would have been accomplished, but she slipped, fell, broke her neck, and was buried in the neighbourhood. The immense block of stone, constituting the Hag's chair, is ten feet long, six feet high, and two feet thick; it has a rude seat, hollowed out of the centre. The ends are elevated nine inches above the seat. It perhaps should be stated that the cross carved upon the seat of this chair, and others on the upright marginal stones, were cut for trigonometrical purposes, by the men engaged in the survey; but the seat also bears traces of real pagan ornamentation, notably zigzags and concentric circles. In front of, and round the base of the chair, considerable quantities of quartz, broken into small lumps, were strewn about.

Fig. 80.

"The Hag's Chair," Loughcrew group of Carns.
Reproduced from the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.*

The late Mr. E. Conwell imagined that he had identified in this boulder the judicial bench of no less a personage than Ollamh Fodhla, whom he describes as "Ireland's famous monarch and law-maker upwards of three thousand years ago." It is needless to add that he has not convinced antiquarians, of any standing, that his supposed identification of the stone-seat is worthy of serious consideration.

A very curious looking stone, formed somewhat like a chair, is situated on the shore of Lough Derg, county Donegal, facing the island supposed to be the entrance to Purgatory (fig. 81). By some of the natives it is called St. Dabehoe's Chair, by others

that of St. Brigid; all, however, agree that it was used by both

Fig. 81.
"St. Brigid's Chair," on the shore of Lough Derg, county Donegal. From a sketch by W. F. Wakeman.

saints. It somewhat resembles the chair of the O'Neills, a seat of nature's formation, and in size is about as large as a modern armchair.

Fig. 82.
"Brehon's Chair," county Dublin. From a sketch by W. F. Wakeman.

The so-called Brehon's or Druid's chair at Glensouthwell, near Holly Park, county Dublin, was in reality a very tall cromleac or dolmen (fig. 82). Beranger described it (the cromleac) as a judgment seat, and says that close by stood a (second) cromleac, in which the Brehon or Druid was probably buried. This supposed cromleac was suggested by the presence of a large stone, evidently the covering block of the monument which had slipped off. Fig. 83 shows the position of this stone, which has now, it is stated, disappeared.

A pile of stones styled the Druid's Judgment Seat stands near the village of Killiney, county Dublin. The entire structure

FIG. 83.

"Brehon's Chair," county Dublin. From a sketch by W. F. Wakeman.

bears the unmistakable impress of very modern fabrication: it is a mere clumsy attempt to gull the public (fig. 84).

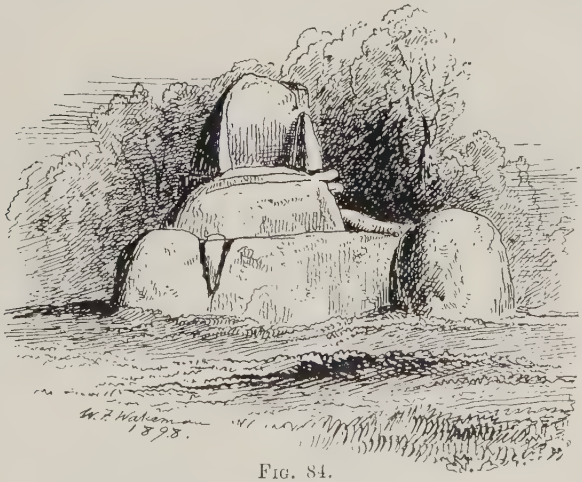

FIG. 84.

"Druid's Judgment Seat," Killiney. A modern fabrication. From a sketch by W. F. Wakeman.

Whatever they may have been used for, these seats were certainly not employed as inauguration chairs, for legend and

history both inform us that Irish chiefs were installed in office by being placed on mere undressed flag-stones, on which, however, the impression of two feet were sometimes observable. Spenser alludes to the custom, and also to the mode of election of chiefs and tanists, as follows:—"They used to place him, that shall be their captain, upon a stone always reserved for that purpose, and placed commonly upon a hill. In some of which I have seen, formed and engraven, a foot which, they say, was the measure of their first captain's foot, whereon, he standing, receives an oath to preserve all the ancient former customs of the country inviolable, and to deliver up the succession peaceably to his Tanist, and then had a wand delivered unto him by some whose proper office that is; after which, descending from the stone, he turned himself round thrice forward and thrice backward."

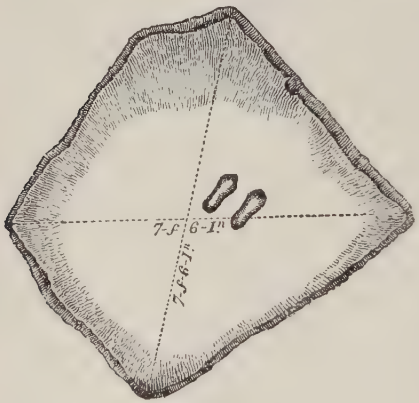

Fig. 85.

St. Columbkille's Flagstone. Reproduced from the *Ordnance Memoir of Londonderry.*

In the parish of Templemore, in the county Derry, there was formerly a gneissose slab called St. Columbkille's Stone, which exhibited the impressions of two feet, right and left, ten inches in length. According to tradition it was one of the inauguration stones of the ancient Irish chiefs of the district. That a stone consecrated to this purpose anciently existed appears from a passage in the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick.* The present and traditional name of the monument should weigh but little against this conjecture, as the slab might have been, and very probably was, subsequently consecrated by St. Columbkille. It should also be borne in mind that, when their local history was lost, it has been the constant practice of the peasantry to connect ancient remains with the name of the patron saint of the district (fig. 85).

Ancient as well as modern beliefs are full of this idea of weird markings made by the hands or feet of either gods or supernatural beings. We have the gigantic footprints on Adam's Peak in Ceylon, and the stone at Jerusalem, on which is to be seen the impression of the fingers of the angel Gabriel.

The best example which can be cited of this class of "inaugu-

ration stones" is the *Lia Fail*, or Stone of Destiny, of which it is recounted that the Dedanann race brought it with them to Ireland. In Christian times it was, of course, given a Scriptural origin, and was styled Jacob's stone. Consecrated stones, so often mentioned in the Old Testament, where the authorized version unfortunately renders the expression images, are at least as old as the time of Jacob, "who set up and consecrated the memorial stone that marked Bethel as a sanctuary. It was the necessary mark of every high place, Canaanite as well as Hebrew, and is condemned in the Pentateuchal laws against the high places."

The *Lia Fail* was held in the highest veneration, and on it the head-kings of Ireland were installed. This supposed magic stone, which roared like a lion when a legitimate king stood upon it, was, it is alleged, sent to Scotland in the ninth century, in order to secure the then dynasty on the throne, an ancient Irish distich, of which the following is a free translation, having induced the belief that the Scotic race should rule only so long as the magic stone was in their possession :—

"If fate's decrees be not announced in vain,
Where'er this stone is kept the Scots shall reign."

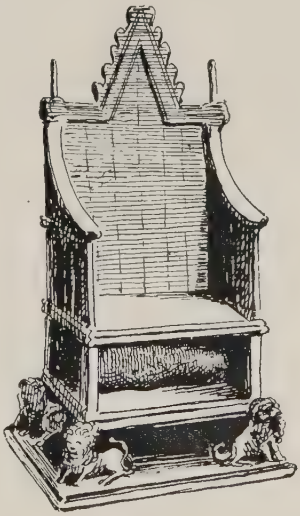

Fig. 86.

The *Lia Fail*, or "Stone of Destiny," placed under the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey. From a sketch by W. F. Wakeman.

It was preserved with the greatest care at Scone, in Perth. On it the monarchs of Scotland were crowned till the year 1296, when Edward, King of England, having overrun Scotland, carried off from the cathedral at Scone, as a trophy of victory, this "Stone of Destiny," (fig. 86) which he placed under the English coronation chair, where it still remains in Westminster Abbey, and on it all our monarchs have since been crowned. The stone is enumerated in an inventory of the choice possessions of King Edward I., and is described as "Una petra magna, super quam Reges Scociae solebant coronari."

Such is the history of the stone, which the greatest empire on earth preserves as a sacred relic in the most venerated of her

temples. Such is the stone on which the long line of her sovereigns have received their crown. Is there in any other land a coronation seat so hoar with historic and prehistoric antiquity? Nevertheless, it must be remembered that, although this waif of the past commands our deepest veneration, it must not also be forgotten, that, like many of a less valued class, in origin it was a mere "fetish," adopted by the pioneers of Christianity into the new religion. It appears to have been first advanced by Petrie, whose lead has been followed by a host of other writers on Irish antiquities—much in the way that one sheep follows another through a gap—that a large pillar-stone standing on one of the mounds at Tara, is the real Lia Fail or Stone of Destiny.

FIG. 87.

Pillar-stone at Tara, alleged, by some antiquarians, to be the true *Lia Fail*, or "Stone of Destiny." From a sketch by W. F. Wakeman.

FIG. 88.

Former position of the "Blarney Stone." Kissing the Stone. From a sketch by W. F. Wakeman.

This monolith does not, however, occupy its original position, for in 1798 it was removed from its former site on "The mound of the Hostages," to mark the trench into which were thrown the corpses of some peasants who had fallen in a skirmish with the troops. The Irish kings, like the present-day urchin (fig. 87), would have had a very uncomfortable seat if perched on the top of this pillar.

Irish and Scotch accounts, however, show great lack of agreement as to the history of the "Stone of Destiny."

There is another celebrated stone endowed by tradition with magic powers, the famous Blarney Stone (fig. 88), which has

given its name to enrich the English language, and whose attributes are thus described by Father Prout :—

> "There is a stone there
> That whoever kisses,
> Oh! he never misses
> To grow eloquent.
> 'Tis he may clamber
> To a lady's chamber,
> Or become a member
> Of Parliament."

Rocking-stones—although by some antiquaries considered as evidences of Druidical worship, may be looked upon as natural phenomena, which can be explained by a course of denudation. The boulder after having been dropped into its present position by the action of ice, the subsequent agency of water would suffice to account for the gradual removal of the earth originally sur-

Fig. 89.

Rocking-stone at Carrickard, county Sligo.
Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

rounding these stones, until the blocks are left balanced on a natural rock-bed, on pretty much the same principle that, the surrounding ice having been melted away by the action of the sun, it leaves rocking stones on the surface of glaciers. The ice covered by the stone is, to a great extent, protected from the influence of the rays of the sun, and does not melt to any considerable extent, whilst the general surrounding level of the glacier sinks, and the stone remains eventually, but for a short period, balanced on the summit of a pedestal of ice. A good exemplification of the denudation theory of the origin of the

rocking stones is afforded by a boulder in the townland of Carrickard, county Sligo, where on the slope of a hill, there is a so-called "rocking-stone" which sometimes rocks and sometimes

Fig. 90.

Rocking-stone, Highwood, county Sligo.
Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

is immovable. The stiffness occurs after heavy rains when clay is washed down the slope and rests in the socket in the rock on which the boulder is balanced (fig. 89).

Not far from this stone, near the village of Highwood, there is another rocking-stone, very easily swayed from side to side (fig. 90). There is one also on Island Magee (fig. 91).

Fig. 91.
Rocking-stone, Island Magee. Reproduced from *The Dublin Penny Journal.*

Above Blacklion, not far from Enniskillen, may be seen a rocking-stone, weighing several tons, which can be set in motion by the hand. It is a great subject of wonder to the country people, who regard it as having been placed in its present position, and used as a plaything, by the giants of long ago.

Rocking-stones have been found in almost every country in Europe, and also in parts of America. These freaks of nature's handiwork are in Ireland by no means rare. In Irish, Carrickna-

buggadda or Cloghnabuggadda signifies the "rocking-stone" (fig. 92). In the north of Ireland they are styled "Shugling" and "Logan Stones." In good examples, a slight push produces an oscillation, not fitful or irregular, but like the beating of a pendulum, and in proportion to the force applied. It is to be particularly noted that these phenomena appear to occur in groups, and also seem to be more frequent in some geological formations than in others.

Fig. 92.

Carricknabuggadda, or "The Rocking-stone," near Wellmount Lodge, Cloonacool, county Sligo.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SEASONS—CERTAIN NUMBERS, DAYS, COLOURS, AND PROVERBS.

The Year divided into two parts—First day of May looked on as the beginning of Summer; the first day of November as the commencement of Winter—The two Divisions representing the Birth and Death of Nature—The Four Seasons—The first of May considered as the awakening of the Earth to life after the long death-sleep of Winter—Ceremonies and Superstitions attached to its celebration—Hallow Eve regarded as the end of Summer—A time of gloom and mourning for the dying Year—Ceremonies and Superstitions attached to its celebration—Days of the Week—Lucky and Unlucky Days—Superstitions attached to each—Superstitions attributed to Numbers—To the numerals two, three, seven, nine, and ten—Superstitions attached to Colours—To black, white, red, &c.—Proverbs—They form a Synthesis of National Character—Much used by Irish Speaking peasantry—A few examples—On women—On the Evil Eye.

The pagan Irish divided their year into two equal divisions. The first day of May, the beginning of the summer half year, was by the Irish speaking population, and is yet, called Beltany.

The first day of November, the beginning of the winter half year, called Sowan, was, like Beltany, a day devoted to various ceremonial observances.

These divisions of the year were each subdivided into two equal parts, or quarters of the whole. Aragh, spring, began on the first day of February; Sowra, summer, on the first day of May; Fowar, autumn, on the first day of August; and Gevra, winter, on the first day of November.

May-day represented to the Irish the awakening of the earth to life and beauty, after the long death sleep of winter, for they, like most other races, when advanced to a certain thought-stage, expressed their belief in another and invisible world by mystic symbolism.

Demons and fairies must be very advanced radicals, as the best preventive against their power, is to scatter primroses on the threshold on May morning, for no spirits can pass over these

flowers. Primroses also protect the inmates from the evil-eye of a stranger, and all strangers during the first three days of May are looked upon with great suspicion. The familiar story, typical of the more morose character of the Saxon, told of one rustic, who inquiring of another regarding a person passing by, and being informed that his comrade did not know the stranger, ejaculated, "'eave a brick at his 'ead," is quite paralleled by the anecdote recounted of a young student, who was mobbed and nearly killed by the inhabitants of a small village. They had noticed him walking backwards and forwards on the grass, on May-morning, while he read aloud from a book in some strange language, and therefore imagined that he was bewitching the herbs, which are especially powerful at this time. Fortunately a priest was able to rescue him, and to inform the excited crowd that the young student was simply reading the language that St. Patrick had brought to Ireland.

On the 1st of May a large bunch of gorse in full bloom, or of marsh marigold, may be seen suspended over every door. Some say it is for the purpose of "pleasing the good people"; others that it is "to keep luck in the house." The bunch of gorse or marigold is afterwards either buried or burnt. In the year 1890, a person who walked through a street of thatched houses in the town of Sligo on the 1st of May could, only in two instances, note the absence of the customary emblem.

A common practice, on May-morning, was for a lover to search for a snail, bring it into the house, and make it crawl amongst the ashes of the extinct fire, where it would trace the initial letters of his fair lady's names. The poet Gay, thus describes this quaint superstition, as also the concluding ceremony of the desiul.

> "Last May-day fair, I searched to find a snail
> That might my secret lover's name reveal!
> Upon a gooseberry bush a snail I found,
> For always snails near sweetest fruit abound.
> I seized the vermin; home I quickly sped,
> And on the hearth the milk-white embers spread.
> Slow crawl'd the snail, and if I right can spell,
> In the soft ashes marks a curious L.
> Oh, may this wondrous omen lucky prove,
> For L is found in Luberkin and Love;
> With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
> And turn me thrice around, around, around."

If a girl wishes to retain a beautiful complexion, she must wash her face in dew, just before sunrise, on May-morning.

Crofton Croker remarks that, "another custom prevalent on May-eve, is the painful and mischievous one of stinging with

nettles. In the south of Ireland it is the common practice of school-boys, on that day, to consider themselves privileged to run wildly about with a bunch of nettles, striking at the face and hands of their companions, or of such other persons as they think they may venture to assault with impunity."

It was a general practice, in most villages, to erect May-poles, but the custom gradually fell into desuetude. The May-pole in the village of Finglas, near Dublin, stood until the year 1847, when the May games were finally suppressed.

In a *Statistical Account* of the parish of Maghera, county Derry, written by the Rev. John Graham, in the year 1814, the writer states that "on the first day of May, from time immemorial, until the year 1798, a large pole was planted in the market place at Maghera, and a procession of May-boys, headed by a mock king and queen, paraded the neighbourhood, dressed in shirts over their clothes, and ornamented with ribbons of various colours. This practice was revived last year."

There was also, in many localities, a pole erected at mid-summer, on St. John's Day, dressed with considerable taste, with flowers, silk handkerchiefs and ribbons. It was of considerable height, and on the top a small basket of cakes, or ginger-breads, and a large bunch of parti-coloured worsted garters were tied. The best musician was always selected to perform at the foot of the pole, whilst the dancers vied with one another for the honour of winning the ginger-breads and the garters. The young men competed for the garters, the young women for the cakes.

Lady Wilde was of opinion that in the May-day processions, the sun was figured as a hoop, wreathed with rowan and marsh-marigold, and "bearing, suspended within it, two balls to represent the sun and moon, sometimes covered with gold and silver paper. This emblem of the hoop and the balls is still carried on May-day by the villagers. . . . At the great long dance, held on May-day, all the people held hands and danced round a tall May-bush, erected on a mound, the girls wearing garlands, while the pipers and harpers, with gold and green sashes, directed the movements."

There is perhaps no very direct proof that the Irish regarded the May-pole as a type of Phallic worship, but there is strong inferential evidence that they so understood it. Study of ancient customs demonstrates the evidence of many apparent absurdities, as for example in the distribution, as before mentioned, of prizes from the mid-summer May-pole, as well as the covert obscenities in superstitious observances relating to the procuring of destined husbands by women, and the gathering of the seeds of the common fern.

From the diary of Joshua Wight, a Quaker, we learn that so late as the middle of the eighteenth century, propitiatory rustic processions took place in the south of Ireland. The observer records, that about noon in the month of May, 1752, there passed through the streets of Limerick many thousand peasants marshalled in companies, representing various branches of agriculture. First of all came the ordinary labourers, "the men in their shirts, in ranks; the women also with green corn and straw; the plough driven along and the harrow; the mowers with their scythes, the reapers, the gleaners, a great number of women, and a great number with their flails, walking in a great procession to congratulate the probability of a good ensuing harvest. . . . These country people made a second appearance the next day, at which time the country (people) of Clare and Limerick joined together, and were very particular in their representation of personating the several orders of husbandry in all the branches of it."

Bands of mummers used to make their appearance at all seasons, but May-day was their favourite and proper festival. This strange custom, a relic evidently of some pagan processional rite, is described by Mr. T. Crofton Croker in his *Fairy Legends.* A troop of May-day mummers consisted of a number of girls and young men of the village and neighbourhood, usually selected for their good looks, or their proficiency, the females in the dance, the youths in hurling and other athletic exercises. "They march in procession, two abreast, and in three divisions, the young men in the van and the rear, dressed in white or other gay-coloured jackets or vests, and decorated with ribbons on their hats and sleeves. The young women are dressed also in light-coloured garments, and two of them bear each a holly bush, in which are hung several new hurling balls, the May-day present of the girls to the youths of the village. The bush is decorated with a profusion of long ribbons, or paper cut in imitation, which adds greatly to the gay and joyous, yet strictly rural appearance of the whole. The procession is always preceded by music, sometimes of the bagpipe, but more commonly of a military fife, with the addition of a drum or tambourine. A clown is, of course, in attendance; he wears a frightful mask and bears a long pole, with shreds of cloth nailed to the end of it, like a mop, which ever and anon he dips in a pool of water or puddle, and besprinkles such of the crowd as press upon his companions, much to the delight of the younger spectators."

In this procession we find a tree or holly bush decorated with ribbon, a clown with a pole, probably representing Phallic worship, together with the introduction of a water-rite. Thus it will be seen that, from a review of the whole subject, stone, water, tree, and animal worship are intimately connected.

Lady Wilde states that "Whitsuntide has always been considered by the Irish as a very fatal and unlucky time—for the people hold that fairies and evil spirits have then great power over men and cattle, both by sea and land, and work their deadly spells with malign and mysterious efficacy. Children born at Whitsuntide, it is said, are foredoomed; they will either have the evil eye, or commit a murder, or die a violent death. Water, also, is very dangerous; no one should bathe, or go a journey where a stream has to be crossed, or sail in a boat, for the risk is great of being drowned, unless, indeed, a bride steers, and then the boat is safe from harm. Great precautions are necessary, likewise, within the house; and no one should venture to light a candle without making the sign of the Cross over the flame to keep off evil; and young men should be very cautious not to be out late at night, for all the dead who have been drowned in the sea round about come up and ride over the waves on white horses, and hold strange revels, and try to carry off the young men, or to kill them with their fiery darts and draw them down under the sea to live with the dead for evermore. . . . At this season, also, the fairy queens make great efforts to carry off the fine stalwart young men of the country to the fairy palace in the cleft of the hills, or to lure them to their dancing grounds, where they are lulled into dreams by the sweet, subtle fairy music, and forget home and kith and kindred, and never desire to return again to their own people: or even if the spell is broken, and they are brought back by some strong incantation, yet they are never the same; for every one knows by the dream-look in their eyes that they have danced with the fairies on the hill, and been loved by one of the beautiful but fatal race, who, when they take a fancy to a handsome mortal lover, cast their spells over him with resistless power."

As May-day was, in olden times, the period of greatest rejoicing, so the first day of November was a time of gloom and mourning for the dying year, the two divisions representing the birth and death of nature.

Hallow Eve, considered the end of summer, is a weird period of dread and ill-omen. The peasantry avoid the neighbourhood of a churchyard on that night. They do not then willingly leave home, or if obliged so to do, should they hear footsteps following them, must beware of looking behind, for it is the dead who are on their track. Should they behold them face to face the earthly gazer will assuredly die. Food should be left out of doors to propitiate the wandering dead. If the offerings disappear the spirits are friendly, and have eaten them, for of course no mortal dare carry off the food devoted to the ghosts of the departed.

After midnight many pagan customs are even yet observed; young men and girls try to peer into the secrets of the future.

The girls hang a garment before the fire, then hide and watch for the shadowy apparition of their future husbands, or they throw a ball of yarn from the window. One end of the skein is retained by the thrower and an apparition takes hold of and commences to wind the other end.

It is also customary to place three plates before a blindfolded person, who is then led up to them. One contains water, the second earth, the third meal. If the blindfolded person puts his hand in the water it indicates that he shall live beyond the year; if in the earth, he must die before the year; if in the meal, it betokens long life and attainment of wealth.

In the incantation scene before a looking-glass the face of the girl's future husband is reflected. Sometimes features appear so appalling that the beholder becomes insane or is found dead, with face and limbs horribly distorted, and the mirror shattered into a hundred pieces. There seems something weird in glass, for it is considered unlucky to see the reflection of the new moon in a looking-glass, and you should never look through the glass of a window at it. If you do so inadvertently you should go out of the house, bow nine times to it, raise your hand nine times, and if you have money in your pocket turn it each time, then you will never want during the year.

A remedy against certain disorders is to go out the first night the new moon is visible, wave an object nine times round the head towards the moon, and in the morning the patient will be perfectly cured.

A girl who desires to conjure up the apparition of her future husband must gather certain herbs by the light of the first full moon of the new year, repeating the following rhyme while she is collecting them :—

> "Moon, moon, tell unto me,
> When my true love I shall see?
> What fine clothes I am to wear?
> How many children I shall bear?
> For if my love comes not to me
> Dark and dismal my life will be."

Then she must cut three small pieces from the sward with a black hafted knife, tie them up in her left stocking with her right garter, place the parcel under her pillow, and whatever she dreams will come to pass.

A contributer to the *Scotsman* of December 27th, 1889, states that "when living a few years ago in Ayrshire our housekeeper used to make obeisance several times to the new moon when first she observed it, looking very solemn the while; and when I asked her why she did so she replied that by doing so she would be sure to get a present before the next moon appeared. She wished me

(then a very young girl) to do so too, and when I told her it was all nonsense she fired up and said her mother had done so, and she would continue to do so. I rather think this is no uncommon practice, for our previous servant did the same thing, and neither of them was older than forty or fifty." The same observance was formerly in vogue in many parts of Ireland.

A description must not be omitted of a remarkable rustic procession, which, not very long ago, used to perambulate yearly the district between Ballycotton and Trabolgan, on the eve of Samhain, *i. e.* the 31st of October. The processional rite is undoubtedly of pagan origin, and announces facts in a manner which, at present, is barely intelligible. The principal characters posed as messengers of a being styled the "Muck Olla," in whose name they levied contributions on farmers. The procession was led by a man enveloped in a white robe or sheet, bearing a rude representation of a horse's head, accompanied by a number of youths blowing cows' horns. This personage, called the *Lair Bhan*, i. e. "the white mare," acted as master of the ceremonies. At each house where the procession halted a long string of verses was recited; in the second distich two expressions occurred, savouring strongly of Paganism, and which would not have been tolerated if publicly uttered elsewhere; the other verses recited by a messenger of the "Muck Olla," set forth that, owing to the goodness of that being, the farmer, whom they addressed, had been prosperous, that the prosperity would continue as long only as he was liberal in donations in honour of the "Muck Olla," and the verses concluded by giving a very unfavourable description of the state into which the farmer's affairs would assuredly fall should this being visit him with the vengeance certain to follow any illiberal or churlish treatment of his followers. Whether owing to the charm of the poetry, or the cogency of the appeal, contributions were, in general, on a very liberal scale; every description of agricultural product was bestowed, milk, butter, eggs, corn, potatoes, wool, &c. A rural retailer awaited the return of the procession and purchased the offerings at market value. The share of each person in the procession was then distributed according to previous arrangement. These scenes were enacted at night.

The question arises, could the original "Muck Olla" have been a deity exhibited, as in Egypt of old, as a living animal? Can the rural merchant be a representative of some druid who maintained his ground long after the establishment of Christianity? To enter fully on an analysis of this strange processional rite would lead to a too long digression.

It is unlucky to move into a new house on a Monday;

Friday is the most propitious day. To build an addition to a house on the west side is believed to be always followed by misfortune, and this will continue until the new building is removed.

Two days in the week, Wednesday and Friday, are considered by the country people most unpropitious for commencing any important affair of life, such as setting out on a journey or entering into the matrimonial state. Should the ancient superstitions be disregarded the project will assuredly have a disastrous termination.

There also exists a popular rhyme enumerating the days of the week and their supposed influence on the dispositions of children born on each, and these two unlucky days are depicted as affecting the characters and after-life of those infants so unfortunate as to enter the world upon either day :—

> "Monday's child fair in the face,
> Tuesday's child fair of grace,
> Wednesday's child lone and sad,
> Thursday's child merry and glad
> Friday's child must work for a living,
> Saturday's child is Godly given, but
> Sunday's child will go straight to heaven."

On the other hand, the most favourable days for charms and incantations to take effect are the unlucky days, Wednesday and Friday.

An old legend relates that the blackbird, the stone-chatter, and the grey cow bid defiance to March after his days were over, and that to punish their insolence March begged of April nine of his days, three for each of his insulters, for which he repaid nine of his own ; hence the first nine days of April are called the borrowing days :—

> "Trí lá lomartha an loinn
> Trí lá sgiuthanta an chlaibhreáin,
> Agus trí lá na bó riabhaighe."

> "Three days for fleecing the blackbird,
> Three days for punishment of the stone-chatter,
> And three days for the grey cow."

A writer in *Notes and Queries* gives a different version :—"I remember when a child in the North of Ireland to have heard a very poetical explanation of the borrowing days of March and April. 'Give me,' said March, 'three days of warmth and sunshine for my poor lambs, while they are yet too tender to bear the roughness of my wind and rain and you shall have them repaid when the wool is grown.'" There is also a Scotch proverb on the three borrowing days still current in Ulster.

During examination of Irish names of places, Dr. P. W. Joyce was greatly struck with the constant occurrence of the numbers two and three, but the number two is met with more frequently than any other. Many of the triple combinations may have been given in later times in honour of, or with some reference to, the doctrine of the Trinity; but from whatever cause it may have arisen, "certain it is, that there existed in the minds of the Irish people, a distinctly marked predilection to designate persons or places, where circumstances permitted it, by epithets expressive of the idea of duality, the epithet being founded on some circumstance connected with the object named, and such circumstances were often seized upon to form a name, in preference to others equally, or more conspicuous." In many of the legends current amongst the North American Indians, the number two plays a prominent part; this may be merely a curious coincidence, but it is also probable that it may be the result of some half-remembered superstition connected with numbers. Since the above was written, a most interesting paper by the Rev. T. Olden, D.D., entitled, *Remarks Supplementary to Dr. Joyce's Paper on the Occurrence of the Number Two in Irish Proper Names* has appeared in the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, and throws a flood of light on the subject. If, as the author supposes, the Irish speaking colonists were but flint-using folk on their first arrival, it is easy to gather what this implies, for according to Mr. Tyler, the New Hollanders, and the aborigines of Victoria (all in the Stone Age when first known to Europeans) possessed no names for numbers beyond two, and the writer further observes:—"In connexion with this fact, the existence of the dual number is of great interest. It preceded the plural, and it continued to survive with the plural for a long time. . . . According to Dr. Wilson, in his work on prehistoric man, it preserves to us a memorial of that stage of thought when all beyond two was an idea of infinite number. Hence, he adds, the tendency of higher intellectual culture has been to discard it as inconvenient and unprofitable, and only to distinguish singular and plural. The earliest use of the dual was to express things which occur naturally in pairs, as the eyes, the ears, the hands; or artificially in pairs, as the horses of a chariot. When things are thought of in pairs they are regarded as a unity, and in the classical languages they may be followed by a verb in the singular. It is in this way that a pair is regarded in Ireland, at the present day, and this explains the habit of speaking of one foot as half a foot, or a cow with one horn as a cow with half a horn. These are idioms in the Irish language, the pair being regarded as a whole. If we apply these observations to the class of names we are discussing, I think we can understand how they came

into existence. Thus, to take the instance of *snamh dá én*, that is the swimming place of two birds. The place was probably frequented by flocks of aquatic birds, and naturally would derive its name from that fact; but our primeval ancestors had no way of expressing a number beyond unity except by the word two. Hence, they called the spot the swimming place of two birds, which, translated into modern language meant, the place where flocks of water-fowl congregate (see *ante*, p. 214). So Dromahaire, or *Drum-dá-ethiar*, the ridge of two demons, means the haunted ridge; for the country people, far from limiting demons to two, are of opinion that the whole atmosphere is swarming with them. . . . The Irish people it thus appears retained, down almost to modern times, a custom which had its origin in the remotest antiquity. Elsewhere it died out, under the influence of hostile invasion and social changes; but the Irish dwelling, in their island home, apart from the intellectual life of Europe, and cherishing the traditions of the past, handed on from age to age the immemorial customs of their race."

Another writer on this subject observes that:—"In many parts of Africa there is considered to be something malefic in the number two, and the birth of twins is regarded as a most grievous calamity though, doubtless, many will contend that the unsophisticated black women are by no means unique in this respect. But the reason for the display of disgust at a 'double event' is due to a different cause—the white mother only taking into account the extra care, attention, and expense entailed; while the black mother, attaching no importance whatsoever to these matters, is only influenced by the possible punishment which will be inflicted upon her for having so flagrantly insulted and offended some mysterious power by giving birth to two, and to obviate the difficulty it was customary to suffocate the weaker of the twins."

With regard, however, to the predilection of the Irish for the number three, it must be again mentioned that the idea of a Trinity is not confined to Christianity, but occurs in many much older religions (see *ante* vol. i., p. 165). In classic mythology we find the three Graces, the three Fates, the three Furies. An article may twice be lost, and twice recovered, but if lost the third time it has disappeared for good. A man may twice pass through a great danger scathless, but the third time he will succumb.

Seven appears to have been regarded as a magical number. The seventh son of a seventh son is dowered with miraculous powers. When such an infant is born, the nurse places a worm

in each of its hands enclosed in a piece of muslin. The hands are kept tied up until the worms die, the dead worms are then thrown away. When the boy grows to manhood he is endowed with great healing and other miraculous powers (see *ante*, p. 191).

There is something most extraordinary in the number nine, a trinity of trinities, a perfect plural, and more credited with mystic properties than any other number. Amongst people, at a certain stage of culture, juggling with numbers forms a special branch of magic of which the Jews and early Christians present typical examples, as it was characteristic of their mysteries that numbers had in them, or are supposed to have had in them, a very deep meaning. A good example is presented by the Book of Daniel in the Old, and the Book of the Revelation in the New Testament.

The number nine, it is stated, was especially sacred amongst the primitive Germans, and their week originally consisted of nine days. Be that as it may, the number nine was, amongst them, held in peculiar reverence.

To cure warts cut a potato into ten slices, count nine, and throw away the tenth, rub the warts in rotation with the nine slices which you then bury, and as they decay, the warts disappear.

Another remedy is to take ten stalks of barley-straw, knot them, count nine and throw away the tenth, rub the wart with the remaining nine, roll them up in paper, throw them on the road over which a funeral is passing, and the warts will vanish.

To cure a stye on the eye, take ten gooseberry thorns, throw the tenth away, point the nine, one by one, at the stye, then throw them away, and the stye will be cured.

When going on a journey pull ten blades of yarrow, keep nine, throw the tenth away, place the nine under the heel of the right foot, and evil spirits will have no power over you.

Pull ten leaves of the male crowfoot, keep nine, throw the tenth away, pound them on a rock with salt and spittle and apply the poultice. It is a certain cure for most diseases in either man or beast.

According to the old rite performed at St. Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg, the Prior, on the ninth day of the probation of the pilgrims, placed them in the cave or purgatory, where they were shut up, stark naked, and were released on the tenth day, at the same hour they had entered the cave.

On Christmas Eve pick ten berries from the mistletoe, keep nine and throw the tenth away; put the nine to steep in a liquid composed in equal proportions of wine, beer, vinegar and honey,

swallow them like pills on retiring to rest, and you are sure to dream of your future.

A country girl, when shelling green peas, will, if she chances to open a pod containing nine peas, lay it on the lintel of the door, and the first unmarried man who enters, it is believed, will be her future husband. This superstition is described by Gay :—

> "As peascod once I pluck'd, I chanced to see
> One that was closely fill'd with three times three;
> Which, when I cropp'd, I safely home convey'd,
> And o'er the door the spell in secret laid.
> The latch mov'd up, when who should first come in,
> But in his proper person—Lubberkin."

If you walk nine times round a fairy rath at the full of the moon, the entrance into the underground fairy mansion will become visible, but if the adventurer enters he must abstain from eating, drinking, or kissing a young fairy wench; if he does he will never be able to return to earth, or leave the enchanted palace.

A cure for inflammation is nine handfuls of mountain moss, dried on a pan before the fire, mixed with nine pinches of ashes from the hearth. Nine pinches of this mixture to be drunk in whey twice a week, until a cure is effected.

Nine hairs plucked from the tail of a wild colt, and bound on the ninth day after birth round the infant's ankle, will make him swift and sure of foot.

A cure for jaundice is to cut nine fibres from the roots of an ash tree, bury them carefully in the ground, and if they remain undisturbed the patient will recover, but if they are exhumed, or in any way interfered with, the sick person will most probably die.

The process of throwing the evil eye on a person is effected by gazing fixedly at the object of detestation through nine fingers.

On Lettermore Island, in southern Connemara, the father, immediately after the birth of a child, throws nine articles of clothing over the mother, counting as he does so, and the number is never varied.

A piece of worsted, with nine knots tied in it, is a great charm for a sprained ankle.

It is to be noticed that in all the first enumerated cases with regard to the mystic properties of the number nine, the number ten is deemed an unlucky number; the various articles are counted and the tenth is cast away. Now it is a curious fact that in many parts of Africa if a negress has a tenth child the infant is at once destroyed. Here also there seems to be an idea that there is something unlucky in the number ten. After

long investigation the writer has come to the conclusion that amongst the Irish the uneven numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 are considered lucky, the even numbers 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 are considered unlucky. According to Lady Wilde the number 2 was esteemed the most unlucky of all numbers. The second day of November was accordingly set apart for sacrifices to the dead, and for the incantations used to bring forth the spirits from the grave and compel them to answer when questioned. To accomplish this, blood must, in addition, be spilled, for the spirits delight in blood, as its colour and odour give them, for the moment, the sensation of life.

Black seems to have been considered a magical colour. If you procure possession of one particular bone of a black cat you render yourself invisible at pleasure. To do this the cat must be boiled alive and then dissected. The bones must, one by one, be held in your mouth, and you must observe closely whether the bone is reflected in the looking glass. When you at last thus hold a bone that is not reflected in the mirror the mystic article is in your possession.

The blood of a black cat laid on a wound with a raven's feather will heal it on the instant.

To cure erysipelas the name of the sufferer should be written round the part affected with the blood of a black cat, one that does not possess a single white hair. Again, the first egg laid by a black hen, if eaten the first thing in the morning, will not only cure fever, but prevent the eater from taking any infection for the remainder of the year.

To see a black snail the first thing in the morning is deemed very unlucky.

To see a white snail the first thing in the morning heralds good fortune. A white lamb to the right hand is also a good omen. The milk of a white cow, milked by a maiden's hand, will cure headache.

Red is also a magical colour. Rowan berries, strings of red worsted, or other such coloured material, tied round the tails of cows after calving, ward off witches and fairies. A red cord is tied around each of the patient's fingers as a cure for *post partum* hæmorrhage. The "red rash" is healed by the application of the blood of a hare on a red rag; when the cure is effected the rag must be buried. A lock of hair tied up in a piece of red cloth worn round the neck cures the whooping cough; the rag must then be buried. A red-coloured cat, or a red cock, or a red pig, are stated to have been often immolated in magical rites.

All the world over there is a regard for the colour red. It was held sacred to Thor, and it has been suggested that it was on this account that the robin acquired its sacred character. Irish and Highland women use the colour red as a charm against witches; women in Esthonia put red thread in the babies' cradles as a preservation against evil, and in China, as in Ireland, red thread is tied round children's wrists to keep off evil spirits.

With regard to the probable signification of the variously coloured stones and pebbles deposited with the dead, in prehistoric interments in Ireland, the reader is referred to vol. i., pp. 328–333.

Irish proverbs treat of the most miscellaneous subjects so that perhaps, on the whole, the best name that can be applied to them is that by which they are known to the Irish-speaking population, i.e. *Sean Ráite*, "Old sayings."

Proverbs form a synthesis of national character, and contain information concerning human actions and tendencies far more reliable, and certainly more amusing, than the best of Irish MSS. The review of proverbs is a true archæological investigation, for old sayings are as much relics of days gone by as are the weathered and moss-grown covering-stones of cromleacs. Irish-speaking peasants rarely discourse on any subject in which their interest is deeply roused, without emphasizing their opinion by the quotation of a proverb. The peculiar veneration in which ancient lore was held is evidenced in the Irish saying:—

"It is impossible to contradict a proverb."

Or again:—

"Though the old proverb may be given up, it is not the less true."

It has been well said that:—

"A proverb is the wit of one and the wisdom of many."

Even Christ, in His teachings, sometimes cited proverbs, or old sayings well known to His listeners, to give point to His doctrine or argument. The habitual use of proverbs or of proverbial phrases shows, however, a certain poverty of language in the individual, for he employs a particular expression with a general application which his hearers, nevertheless, perfectly understand. Thus a country man cannot inform you that "perseverance overcomes the most formidable obstacles," but he says, "a constant drop wears a hole in a stone." His vocabulary hardly furnishes him with terms to say, "attach

the blame to the culpable individual," he therefore says, "put the saddle on the right horse." When desirous to express "the circumstance does not affect you," he says, "it takes no butter off your bread."

Irish proverbs contain many allusions to pagan beliefs, superstitions, and customs; a few on foresight, caution, and prudence, which do not appear to have their exact equivalents in English, and others which have distinctive Irish characteristics and colouring, may be of interest. For the original Irish, the reader is referred to the vols. 5, 6, &c., of the *Ulster Journal of Archæology*:—

The Irish proverb, "He that has the quickest hand, let him have the white hound and the deer," is equivalent to the English saying, "First come, first served," and seems to refer to an incident which occurred in some old hunting expedition.

There is another proverb generally applied to persons, who are constantly talking about doing a thing, but never set about it, "That is like the intended journey of the hens to Scotland," and children when they hear the hens cackling at night, say they are talking about going back to Scotland, where they came from. There is also an old Irish tune called *Triall na g-cearc go h'Albainn.*

The raven is believed to predict future events, hence the saying, "The knowledge of the raven's head." "A black raven in autumn, and a scald-crow in spring," *i.e.*, signs of good weather. An enumeration of bad omens is conveyed in the following:—"I heard the cuckoo when I had no food in my belly; the first snail that I saw was creeping on a bare stone; I saw a black ram with its hinder parts towards me, so it was easy for me to know that I would not prosper that year."

"No man ever went to Hell without sixpence at the time of his death," a relic of a pagan burial custom (see vol. i., p. 240).

"What did Goll say? that it is hard to take breeches off bare hips." As hard as to take them off Highlanders.

"He is as great a liar as Oram," a common saying in Louth and Meath. Origin unknown.

"The three wonders of Ballyore:—a mill without a stream, a hermitage, and a monastery in a wilderness." Ballyore is in the county Louth. The mill is driven direct from the lake without a mill course. The reference to a hermitage is not at present decipherable. It is proverbial that monasteries were generally built in the midst of the very best land.

> "There were four things that Finn (MacCool) hated;
> A worthless hound, and a slow horse,
> A chieftain without wisdom,
> And a wife that does not bear children."

"He is so wise that he would decide between Conall and Eóghan," referring to the well-known dispute which ended in the division of Ireland between these two chieftains.

If a woman at a funeral rubbed the earth of a graveyard off her foot, it was believed that her next child would be deformed or reel-footed, hence the saying, "He has a churchyard-crook in his foot." But the clearest allusion to paganism occurs in the proverb, "The front of everything to the south," alluding to the ceremony of the desiul. Formerly even ploughmen used to turn their horses' heads to the south when yoking or unyoking them.

> "Four priests that are not greedy,
> Four Frenchmen that are not yellow,
> Four shoemakers that are not liars,
> These are twelve men not in the country":

demonstrates, amongst other things, the popular opinion of the peasantry with regard to the fondness for money of their spiritual advisers. *Sé a leanbh féin a bhaisteas a sagart air tús*, "a priest christens his own child first," is a world-wide proverb that needs no comment; but the saying, "white breeches are a good indication of a Christian," is enigmatical, but may point to the fact that the old Irish pagans did not wear these, at present, necessary articles of clothing.

Another Irish proverb equivalent to the saying, "throw a sprat to catch a salmon," is *Faisiún mná na cille le mná tuaithe, alpán chuca a's millín uatha*, alluding to the usual custom of the nuns with country-women, they receive a great lump, and they give a small one in return, applicable to ecclesiastics in general, who were in the habit of giving presents of small value, in the expectation of receiving greater.

"Blow before you drink," alluding to hot broth, which may burn the mouth if eaten incautiously; or to a drink, lest flies or insects should be floating on the surface; applied as a warning against over haste in anything.

"Cut the *gad* nearest the throat," transports us back to a time before hemp ropes were used, when criminals were hanged by a twisted gad or withe, made of willow rods, and meant that if one wished to save the life of a culprit one should cut the gad nearest his throat; or if a horse had fallen, entangled in this primitive harness, and was in danger of being strangled, the same advice would suggest itself. It now signifies, "Do the thing first that is of the most pressing need."

"Praise your *gad* and not your rod; for many a beautiful rod will not twist," an allusion to the general use of willow rods (*gads*) for a variety of purposes.

"It is time for you to be softening the *gads*." It is time to to prepare for departure.

"She never sells her hen on a wet day," a hen with wet feathers looking much smaller than when dry, a recommendation to be cautious in our dealings with knowing people.

"It is better to turn back from the middle of the ford than to be drowned in the flood"; better to stop in time than to lose all, said when one repents of a thing, and draws back at the last moment. Several Irish proverbs refer to fords in rivers, which were naturally very important places before bridges were built.

There is also the proverb: "Let every man praise the ford as he finds it," *i.e.* Let every one speak of the place, object, or individual, as he finds them.

"Let every man praise the bridge he goes over."

"He that waits long enough at the ferry will get over at last."

"Blue are the hills that are far away."

"However great the flow, it will ebb."

"Listen to the wind of the mountains until the waters ebb," *i.e.* let the storm blow by.

"It is the shallowest water that makes the greatest noise."

"Deep water is still."

"On an unknown path every foot is slow."

"Face the sun; turn your back to the storm."

"Though the day be long, night comes at last."

"Good luck comes in tricklets; ill luck comes in rolling torrents."

"A misty winter brings a pleasant spring; a pleasant winter brings a misty spring."

"A wind from the south brings heat and produce;
A wind from the west, fish and milk;
A wind from the north, cold and flaying;
And a wind from the east, fruit on trees."

"Red in the south means rain and cold,
Red in the east, rain and frost,
Red in the north, rain and wind,
Red in the west, thawing and sun."

"Lie down with the lamb, and rise with the bird,
From the time you see a harrow and a man behind it,
Until you see stacks of turf and cocks of hay."

"The man that stays out long his dinner cools." Applied to anyone who remains too long from home; for instance, to O'Rorke, who was on a pilgrimage, when his wife ran away with

Dermot MacMurrough, and brought about the English invasion of Ireland.

"The windy day is not the day for fastening the thatch"; thatch is fastened down by a number of wattles or pointed rods of willow, called *sgolbs*. A boisterous day is not the proper time for such work, and the proverb is applied in all cases where foresight is necessary.

"Many a time the man with ten has overtaken the man with forty," refers to an Irish game of cards won by marking forty-five. A player who at the commencement of a deal has only marked ten, while his opponent has marked forty, may still overtake him and win the game. The proverb is intended as an encouragement to persons engaged in business, to prosecute the trade undiscouraged by their first want of success.

"By degrees the castles are built" (Rome was not built in a day): a proverb which no doubt took its rise when the Irish saw the Anglo-Norman strongholds rising, one after the other, around the English Pale.

"You have the foal's share of the harrow." You are an idle spectator. While the mare draws the harrow the foal walks beside her doing nothing.

"This is Friday and (God prosper them!) they do not hear us," alluding to the fairies, as the peasantry are averse to naming them directly. Some say the fairies have no power over mortals on a Friday.

"A Friday's fast is not better for you than to burn a *dar-daol*." The *dar-daol*, a small species of jet-black beetle, is superstitiously feared as unlucky and poisonous, and is always thrown into the fire whenever found. In *Notes and Queries*, vol. ii., 4th Series (1868), there is an extraordinary note on the subject of the *dar-daol*.

"What the *Pooka* writes let him read it himself."

"It is true as that there is a *Pooka* in Kells."

"He got off betwixt hurdle and door-post." In former times the doors of cottages were made of wattled hurdles. The proverb signifies that he had a narrow escape, or perhaps that he escaped secretly, as the hurdle-door in shutting made no noise.

"The blind man's shot at the tub." A reference to the story that Ossian, the blind warrior-bard, threw an apple at St. Patrick's housekeeper, because she gave him scanty rations. The expression means a random hit, a blind man's cast.

"Though you have broken the bone you have not sucked out the marrow." You have done the most difficult part of the work, but not finished it.

"The end of every old curse is an old white horse," meaning

that the finishing stroke of ill luck is being served with a law process. The white horse is apparently an allusion to the arms of Hanover.

"He is like a bag-pipe: he never makes a noise till his belly 's full."

"The closing in of an autumn evening is like the running of a hound on a moor." An autumn night comes on quickly.

"A poem ought to be well made at first, for there is many a one to spoil it afterwards."

"Do not build the sty before the litter comes." Do not count your chickens before they are hatched.

"The door-step of a great house is slippery," alluding to the uncertainty of the favour of great men.

"Many a sudden change takes place in a spring day," a metaphor applied to the fickleness of youth.

"He thinks that he himself is the very stone that was hurled at the castle." He was the one that bore the brunt.

"You would be a good messenger to send for Death," said of a slow messenger when he delays long on the road.

"A slow hound has often luck when a swift hound has not," alluding to dogs coursing a hare—sometimes the hare, by a sudden turn, causes the foremost hound to run past her, when she is caught by a slower dog. It signifies that often he who plods steadily at home succeeds as well as he who roams about looking for business.

"After misfortune the Irishman sees his profit." He sees too late what he ought to have done.

"Truth is often bitter," (see *ante* p. 224).

"Cows far from home have long horns." We value things at a distance, or out of our reach, more than they deserve.

"He got it from nature, as the pig got the rooting in the ground." He inherits the quality, or vice, from his parents.

> "The Leinster-man is sprightly,
> The Munster-man boastful,
> The Connaught-man sweet tongued,
> And the Ulster-man impudent."

"He that lies down with the dogs, will rise up with the fleas." You cannot touch pitch without being defiled.

"If you are fond of dung, you see no motes in it."

> "The end of every ship is drowning,
> And the end of every kiln is burning;
> The end of every feast is wasting,
> And the end of every laugh is sighing."

There is an end to everything. With regard to the application

of the term "drowning" to inanimate objects, see vol. i., pp. 219, 220. Under date, A.D. 922, the Irish Annals record that the Danes ravaged Iniscaltra, in Lough Derg, and "drowned its relics and shrines."

"Say little, and the little you say, say well."

"Repentance will not cure mischief," *i.e.* sorrow will pay no debt.

"The heaviest head of wheat hangs its head lowest," *i.e.* merit is modest.

"That is like taking the axe out of the carpenter's hands," said when an incompetent person takes any business out of the hands of one more fit to do it.

"He has got the two ends of the rope, and leave to pull." He has it all his own way. He is master of the situation.

"The hen going to seek for the goose," said when people give small presents in expectation of receiving greater ones. Throw a sprat to catch a salmon.

"The leisure of the smith's helper (that is) from the bellows to the anvil," *i.e.* no rest at all.

"He that is not in the habit of riding forgets the spurs." This proverb has many applications. Sometimes it means that a man not used to good company is at a loss how to behave.

"Out of her head the cow is milked," signifying that, according to the manner a cow is fed, she gives better or worse milk. You may expect to be served by a man according as you treat him.

"A fight between hornless sheep," *i.e.* a mock fight; said of persons appearing to be very angry with each other, but not so in reality.

"What happened to him? What was at the hen's foot" (that is, bad luck).

"Do not go between the tree and the bark," *i.e.* do not intermeddle in a family quarrel.

"The tree in the hedge remains, but not so the hand that planted it."

"Take your thirst to the brook, as the dog does."

"Let every herring hang by its own tail."

"Night is a good herd: she brings all creatures home."

"Dry soles won't catch fish."

"Honour cannot be patched."

"It is hard to take the twist out of the oak that grew in the sapling."

"He who has his choice and chooses the worse is to be pitied."

"Losing the bundle, gathering the wisps."

"Ignorance is a heavy burden."

"Lazy is the hand that ploughs not."

"He that ploughs not at home, ploughs not abroad."

"For whom ill is fated, him will it strike."

"He that does not knot his thread loses his stitch."

"Better knot straws than do nothing."

"A thing is the bigger of being shared."

"A promise is a debt."

"A friend's eye is a good looking-glass," *i.e.* the best mirror is an old friend.

"A wise man keeps his counsel; the fool reveals his."

"A king's son is no nobler than his company."

"He that lives longest sees most."

"Fear is worse than fighting."

"He that conquers himself conquers an enemy."

"Every foot treads on him who is in the mud."

"From hand to mouth will never make a wealthy man."

"Friendship is as it is kept."

"He that flees not will be fled from."

"Love hides ugliness."

"What is the good of a pipe if it is not played on."

"Courtesy never broke one's crown."

"Choose your speech."

"Correct counting keeps good friends."

"Assurance is two-thirds of success."

"Marriage comes unawares like a 'soot drop.'"

"Modesty is the beauty of women."

"Take a bird from a clean nest."

"Choose your wife as you wish your children to be."

"Choose a good woman's daughter though her father were the devil."

"A man's wife is his blessing or his bane."

The ladies of ancient Erin are not complimented in the proverbs:—

"Wherever there are women there is talking; and wherever there are geese there is cackling."

"Women, priests, and poultry have never enough."

"A woman has an excuse readier than an apron."

"There are three things that do not bear nursing: an old woman, a hen, and a sheep," *i.e.* who are not thankful for being nursed.

"The secret of an old woman's scolding," *i.e.* no secret at all, for a scolding woman will let it out in her rage.

> "Do not believe the scald-crow, or the raven,
> Nor any false deity of the women;
> Whether the sun rises early or late,
> It is according to God's will this day will be."

The first, second, and third lines of this distich consist of an enumeration of pagan omens; observations on the movements of the scald-crow or Bav, of the raven; reliance to be placed on female deities, or the rising or setting of the sun, declared to be of no utility and vain as compared with the acme of primitive Christian and Mahometan teaching; there is no one to be relied on but God alone, and there is but one God.

> "The yellow cows are milked, and their milk is drunk;
> While the white cows come back from the fair and no bid for them."

Yellow cows are believed to give better milk than white cows and, therefore, sell better. The proverb is applied to women, and hints that a girl with an uninviting exterior may make a better wife than a handsome one.

"A pullet's head on an old hen." A hen's age can never be told by her head. The proverb is applied to an elderly woman dressing herself with a showy cap or clothes more suitable for a girl.

"You would not do that if you had any flax on your distaff," said of a woman spending her time foolishly.

"She has got the length of his shoe." She knows how to manage him.

"He (or she) has washed his (her) shoes." Sometimes used as a term for "making oneself at home." Kuno Meyer quotes a poem ascribed to the dethroned King Diarmait mac Cerbaill, in which it is employed in this sense:—

> "I was the lawful bridegroom
> Of the beautiful daughter of Erimon (Erin).
> Clerics have thrust me
> From the rule of highland Fotla (Erin);
> Young unlawful kings
> Will wash their shoes in her house."

"She is a good wife, but she has not taken off her shoes yet," *i.e.* she has not been proved yet; speaking of a newly married woman.

"The old hag is the better of being warmed, but the worse of being burned." We ought to be kind but not over-kind. Some say that the proverb refers to the burning of witches.

"The woman has neither excuse nor rest who has not a pipe or a child."

"Women are shy, and shame prevents them from refusing the men."

"It is nothing but folly to treat an old woman to a dram," you will get no return for it.

"It is the yellow *preshagh* that brings the Meath women to

harm." The wild kail, called in Irish *preshagh*, was made use of as a kitchen vegetable. The proverb alludes to the practice of the women who, in going out in the evening to gather it in the fields, made this an excuse for meeting their lovers.

"A bad wife takes advice from every man but her own husband."

"It was not her mother's feet that she washed," said when a girl turns out badly, *i.e.* she was not a good daughter and will have no luck.

"The daughter of an active old woman makes a bad housekeeper," *i.e.* an indulgent mother makes a sluttish daughter.

"She burnt her coal and did not warm herself," said when a woman makes a bad marriage.

"Never take a wife who has no fault," because there is no such thing.

"Every man can control a bad wife but her own husband."

"She has only as much regard for him as a two-year-old dog has for his mother."

"A blanket is the warmer of being doubled," said when relatives marry.

"The husband of the sloven is known in the field amidst a crowd."

"A ring on the finger and not a stitch of clothes on the back," an extravagant woman and a bad housekeeper.

"She has put a *bioran suain* in his head" (his hair): said of a profound sleeper. The bioran suain was a magical pin supposed to possess the power of throwing a person into a deep sleep.

"No trial until one gets married." "No worse thing exists than a bad-tempered woman." "There are three without rule: a mule, a pig, and a woman." In fact, the gibes of the Irish old-world wits may be summarised in the words of the popular nineteenth century poet:—

> "Down to Gehenna, or up to the throne
> He travels the fastest who travels alone."

Reference to the superstition of "the evil eye" is conveyed in the warning, "Take care lest you cast the evil eye on him." When praising anything, animate or inanimate, one should say, "God bless it," for expressing admiration of the object without accompanying and qualifying the praise with a blessing, is an act of overlooking by the evil eye.

On May eve the evil eye possesses more than usual malignity, and the mother or the nurse that would carry her infant charge in her arms anywhere outside the house would be regarded as devoid of affection, and reprobated as a monster.

"Youth and loveliness are thought to be especially exposed to peril; therefore not one woman in a thousand will then show herself abroad. Nor must it be supposed that conscious ugliness is any protection; on the contrary, neither grizzled locks nor the brawny hand of the roughest ploughman exempt from the blast."

The ancient Jews were also firm believers in the power of the evil eye, if we are to judge from Proverbs xxiii. 6, 7:—

> "Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye,
> Neither desire thou his dainties;
> For as he reckoneth within himself, so is he:
> Eat and drink, saith he to thee;
> But his heart is not with thee."

When a country-woman seeks the good offices of charlatans, as to damage inflicted on her property by the evil eye of one of her neighbours, or as to an unaccountable decrease of milk from the cows, she is advised to place three bronze articles, half-pence for choice, on the bottom of a tin can, and ask the suspected neighbour to milk three streams from the cow upon them, and the spell is thus dissolved. This is a curious superstition, as it may be said to have the date of its origin attached. Bronze being regarded as partaking of the supernatural, shows that while it was known, it was far from common.

Virgil says the notion among his contemporaries was that evil resulted from the glance of an envious eye; whilst Pliny records his testimony as to the efficacy of spittle as a preservative against ill-luck, witchcraft, or the evil eye. Even in the present day a labourer before commencing work, spits on the palm of his hand, a pugilist often does the same before commencing a fight, and in buying cattle at a fair the purchaser spits on the "luck-penny," and in olden days the faction-fighter spat on his black-thorn.

A practice to be observed amongst the peasantry between parting friends is supposed to propitiate good fortune. The right hand is passed across the mouth, a sharp sound, somewhat resembling *thup* is emitted; the hand is held out, after a similar observance, the offered palm is met by that of the other person, and hands are heartily shaken. You should not shake hands with the left hand, for the Irish have the old saying, "a curse with the left hand to those we hate, but the right hand to those we honour."

There are exceptions to the useful property of saliva; for instance, the Four Masters relate that, in A.D. 734, an Irish chieftain died, and they account for his decease by the fact that wicked people used to eject spits in his face, in which they had put charms.

Thomas Dinely, in the *Journal* of his tour in Ireland, in the reign of Charles II., thus further explains the singular custom of spitting, "for by their custom they are never to bless, praise, or commend anything, without spitting thereon, for fear of witchcraft." When opening the eyes of the blind man, by mixing clay with spittle, and then applying it with the finger, may not Christ have wished to teach the Jews a lesson by utilizing a prevalent and apparently widespread superstition ?

On this subject "Maimonides states that the Jews were expressly forbidden by their traditions to put fasting-spittle upon the eyes on the Sabbath day, because to do so was to perform work, the great Sabbath crime in the eyes of the Pharisees which Christ committed when he moistened the clay with his spittle and anointed the eyes of the blind man therewith on the Sabbath day."

To Greeks and Romans alike fasting spittle was a charm against "fascination" or the "evil eye." Persius Flaccus says :—"A grandmother, or a superstitious aunt, has taken baby from his cradle, and is charming his forehead and his slavering lips against mischief by the joint action of her middle finger and her purifying spittle."

Here it is not the spittle alone, but the conjoint action of the spittle and of the middle finger which works the charm. The middle finger was believed to possess a favourable influence on sores, or rather it possessed no malign influence, while all the other fingers, in coming in contact with a sore, were thought to have a tendency to inflame or poison it.

The restoration of sight to a blind man with fasting spittle is attributed to Vespasian by both Suetonius and by Tacitus. In Ireland, to obtain a perfect result, saliva should be used only after a "black fast," when mixed with dust, it is most effectual as a cure for sore lips, and other disorders, internal as well as external (see *ante*, pp. 193–195).

Mr. F. T. Elworthy remarks that this strange custom of spitting opens up a wide field of inquiry, "for not only is it practised in the hope of obtaining good fortune, but in all ages, and almost among all peoples, it has ever been considered as an act to safeguard the spitter, whether against fascination or other evils. Among the ancient Greeks and Romans 'the most common remedy against an invidious look was spitting; it was hence called *despuere malum*.' According to Theocritus 'it is necessary to spit three times into the heart of the person who fears fascination.'"

When describing a hurt or wound, if a countryman should, with a view of illustrating his verbal description, touch the corresponding part of his own or another person's body, the

touch is ominous of ill, is in fact as bad as the glance of the evil eye, and a sure precursor of similar mischief to the person, or part so touched, unless the narrator, or some other individual present, immediately ejaculates, "God bless the mark," or "God save the mark." This acts as a charm to avert disaster. An exactly similar superstition prevailed amongst the Romans, as we learn from a passage in Petronius, where Trimalchio recounts a marvellous adventure in which a man thrust his sword through the body of a sorceress. In describing the incident, Trimalchio points out, on his own person, the exact locality of the wound, by laying his hand on the part and exclaims, "Salvum sit quod tango," "Safe be what I touch," exactly corresponding to the Irish saying, "God bless (or God save) the mark." The mere touch is deemed to possess equally malign influence, whether applied to the naked body itself, or to the garment covering the part indicated, and the Roman idea seems to have been precisely the same as the Irish, for it is hardly to be presumed that Trimalchio exposed his naked body, since that circumstance is not mentioned by Petronius.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRANSITIONAL ARCHÆOLOGY, AND THE CONTINUITY OF RELIGION.

CHAOS presented by the past of ancient Erin—Evolution—Religion in Ireland, as elsewhere, progressed by gradual development—Reasoning of the savage regarding body and soul—Similarity between death and sleep—Soul after death assumes the form of a butterfly—Gradual amelioration in religious ideas—Three stages in their development—Rude flint-using man vanished without leaving a trace of his religion—Polished flint-using man—His religion—Ancestor worship—Belief in a life after death—Curious evidence yielded by fractured funeral urns—Important position ascribed to Goddesses—The individual man creates a God after his individual imagination—Irish belief a colourless religion—No great All-Father—Christianity came with a superior civilization—Its long-continued struggle with Paganism—Early Irish Saints take the place of the more ancient tribal medicine men—In religion, as in material matters, one custom glided into the other—No hard dividing line—Primitive rites banished from public practice, kept alive in local superstitions—Superstition a rudimentary religious instinct—Unsympathetic treatment of it therefore unscientific—Absurd theories have retarded the proper study of superstitions—Times changing rapidly—The present an epoch of religious deception—On the other hand the men of the Eld believed firmly in their creed—Truth must eventually triumph over Error—We should hold fast to nothing but that which is certain.

THE student is puzzled by the chaos presented by the past life of ancient Erin, oppressed by its vastness, and half fears, as he gazes despairingly into it, that he will never be able to master its details and produce order out of confusion. We should essay, however, to read the past in the light of the present. As the distance increases details tend to disappear, or resolve themselves into mere outlines, which in turn vanish in the dim perspective of innumerable ages; yet, if an uninterrupted view be finally obtained, it will probably change many preconceived ideas as to the state of society in the Eld.

We ourselves are in the transition period, and are passing from an age of mere ideas and theories to one of careful observation and classification of facts. Great results cannot be at

once achieved; we must be content to advance as we walk, step by step. An archæological genius does not suddenly rise up; he is the outcome of many more or less successful attempts, for in the literary limbo, amidst a veritable "Sahara of mediocrity," there are to be found many meritorious writers. The mind of the master must grasp the whole subject; his precursors have succeeded only in branches of a science which he must treat in its entirety; for a number of undeservedly obscure and half-forgotten workmen have gathered the materials and rough-hewn the blocks with which the master-builder erects his edifice.

We now, to a great extent, perceive how, from a primitive beginning, civilization progressed in the most simple and natural manner, and we recognise it is a law of all science that, to master any subject thoroughly, we must have a complete knowledge of it, not only in its genesis, but also in its growth, *ab ovo usque ad mala*. Once the existence of a great First Cause, whom no language can describe, is admitted, it matters little whether creation be regarded as carried on by evolution, or by separate and distinct creative acts. Evolution is the more wonderful, the more credible, and the simpler of the two means, and it would effect, what is also generally to be seen in nature, a smooth, equally adjusted, and continuous movement. The theory of Evolution makes clear as the noonday what before was enveloped in darkness. Why then the bitter opposition with which it is met by certain sections of the community? Is it that, like the science of Geology, it is attacked, not on its own account, but for the reason that it seems to threaten the overthrow of some religious dogmas? As it is, "extinguished theologians" already lie around its cradle, "as the strangled snakes beside that of Hercules." Substituting abuse for argument will not undermine its position. Geology weathered this storm, and so will the theory of Evolution if it be founded upon truth. If the theory of Evolution be admitted as a satisfactory account of the existing conditions under which we find life now manifested on this globe of ours, may we not apply the theory further. What reason have we for supposing that, while Evolution has acted so far, it can act no farther? Is it not more philosophical to assume that the same law is in operation beyond ourselves, and that, therefore, there are in existence beings as much our superiors, as we are, in our own opinion, superior to primordial germs. Such beings, if they exist, would no more necessarily be apparent to ordinary sight than is electricity, which though a reality is invisible. We cannot define the line which bounds the physical on one side, the supernatural on the other. We live on an island of fact surrounded by an ocean of mystery. We feel the action upon us of invisible forces, and perceive that the

world in which we live is moving in obedience to some vast overmastering power. Froude justly observes that, "of the true nature of our existence on this planet, of the origin of our being, and of the meaning and purpose of it, of what is life, what is death, and of the nature of the rule which is exerted over us, we really know nothing. We live merely on the crust or rind of things. The inner essence is absolutely concealed from us. But though these questions admit of no conclusive answer, there is something in our character which perpetually impels us to seek for an answer. Hope and fear, conscience and imagination suggest possibilities, and possibilities become probabilities, when allied with high and noble aspirations."

As the writer has elsewhere observed, facts, when transmitted by word of mouth merely, gradually lose individuality and definiteness as to time; they pass rapidly into the class of myths; thus true history may be said to begin only with the introduction of writing. According to native annalists, Erin burst suddenly on the gaze of mankind in a state of advanced civilization, without undergoing intermediate stages of improvement. No nation, it is believed, suddenly developed a self-created civilization; it must progress even as a man who passes from tottering infancy through successive stages of advancement; and it has been remarked that the savage, hunting, pastoral, and agricultural phases of advance in the nation, correspond with those of infancy, childhood, youth, and manhood in the individual.

These stages are plainly traceable in Ireland. First comes the period when primitive man, the mammoth, the megaceros, the cave-bear, the reindeer, and other animals shared the country, man being then only in his infancy or rude flint-using stage. This race disappears from archæological observation and is succeeded by men who use smaller stone weapons more carefully made and sometimes polished; this stage is the nation's childhood. Then appears bronze-using man—this stage is the nation's youth. Like their predecessors, however, they were also in a state of savagery. By the term "savagery" it is not implied that there was amongst them a total absence of culture, but that they were devoid of the ordinary arts of then existing civilization. The mere fact of the aborigines being ignorant of the use of cement in building, prior to the introduction of Christianity, proves this. If writing had been introduced into ancient Erin, or if any general or constant means of communication existed between the Continent and Ireland, the practice of reducing limestone into a suitable material for solidifying their stone structures would have come into general use.

It may be laid down as certain that religion, like civilization in Ireland, progressed by gradual development without the

occurrence of any vast hiatus or gap. This theory is in accordance with science, whether regarded from an archæological, geological, or ethnological standpoint, for no great physical revolution, no great climatic change, no new and intruding race of human beings arriving upon the scene from unknown regions is needed to explain the apparently sharp break between the Old and the New Stone Age. The extinction of the great Pleistocene fauna made it no longer necessary to employ such weighty weapons as hitherto. Man experimented and discovered that a lighter implement would effect a deadly wound and be easier to carry, and the rapid growth in the art of chipping flint sufficiently accounts for the seemingly swift transition from one form of primitive life to another, but slightly more advanced. The older implements were now often re-wrought into smaller and more highly-finished weapons. A similar process may be observed in the changes from copper to bronze, from bronze to iron, from iron to steel. We may with advantage recall what has happened in our own time upon the employment of electricity to illustrate the results of the changes just mentioned.

We have at last learned that man's origin, history, and religious feelings are the greatest problems that invite solution, and that to obtain anything like a good result every shred of evidence bearing on the subject must be carefully collected and analysed. Thus, a sketch of the religion of the ancient Irish, opens up an immense field of research. Paganism existed in the land for untold centuries, not only before the introduction of Christianity by the early missionaries, but long after the period when the religion of Christ became the acknowledged creed of Ireland, and it has left its impress, faint it is true, but still discernible in the peculiar beliefs and customs of the peasantry, for in these the Pan-song of nature still vibrates.

The history of the development of religion in Ireland may be said to be the history of almost all religions; we may refer to it as a trustworthy guide to the gradual development in the mind of early man of the first crude conception of the Infinite; for—

> "Man, as yet, is being made, and ere this crowning age of ages,
> Shall not æon after æon pass, and touch him into shape."

Physically man remains practically unchanged; mentally his development continues. The mental capacity of the average European is much higher than that of his remote ancestor, and we cannot set limits to this improvement. Man's age on earth is well depicted in the epigram, "Dieu est éternel, mais l'homme est bien vieux."

The reasoning of the savage, when analysed, is, from his standpoint, very logical. He observes that the shadow only

accompanies the body under certain conditions; it leaves it in the twilight, but resumes attendance in daylight. The spirit leaves the body in sleep, as the shadow leaves the substance in the absence of the sun; shadow and spirit are therefore, to the savage, alike separate entities from the body. The shadow departs and returns; the spirit departs and returns; and though the visible body dies, there is no proof to the savage mind that its invisible complement dies also. During captivity amongst the Indians a traveller relates that he overheard a convalescent patient reproved for his imprudence in exposing himself to the atmosphere, as his shadow had not altogether returned to abide with him. But all this was trifling when compared with the mocking echo to whom day and night were alike.

It is very certain that the modern, and therefore extremely probable that the ancient, Irish regarded the echo as a supernatural or incorporeal being. This was, undoubtedly, one of the most reasonable of their superstitions; for it is difficult to convince an uneducated person that a voice can be heard without proceeding direct from a human being, Ovid states that the echo formerly possessed "a body, not a mere voice," and again describes it as "one who has neither learned to hold her tongue after another has spoken, nor to speak first herself." There is a legend regarding the echo told relative to the death of one of Finn MacCool's warriors. Sorely wounded, he shouted so loudly that the surrounding hills rang again, and conveyed his cries to his sister on the opposite side of the lake. Recognising her brother's voice, she sprang into the lough to his assistance, but the echo deceived her as to the direction she ought to take; she swam round and round; and finally sank exhausted beneath the waters. Ever afterwards the echo was called in Ireland "The Deceiver." The inhabitants of Iceland say it is "the voice of the Dwarfs." Dick Fitzgerald, in *The Lady of Gollerus*, calls the echo "the child of one's own voice." The fanciful antiquary Vallancey states that a literal translation of the Irish compound name for echo is "the daughter of the voice," and is a convincing argument of the Eastern origin of the race; for "what people in the world, the Orientalists and the Irish excepted, called the copy of a book the son of a book, and the echo the daughter of a voice?"*

Again to the savage, the vision of well-remembered hunting

* An amusing anecdote relating to the celebrated echo at Killarney was lately recounted in *The Spectator*: "A number of boatmen who were quarrelling about the division of 'tips' indulged at the top of their voices in a good deal of profane language which the marvellous echo repeated verbatim. 'Arrah look at that now for a schandal,' said one of the party who was of a pious turn, 'taching the poor harmless echo to curse and sware.'"

scenes, and of the loved ones, the friends, enemies, and gibing phantoms which appeared to him at night, were thoroughly inexplicable. Whence came the landscapes and the creatures which he saw when he was in dream-, or in spirit-land? Why did they vanish with the dawn, only to re-appear with the darkness?

> "O Spirit Land, thou land of dreams!
> A world thou art of mysterious gleams,
> Of startling voices and sounds at strife,
> A world of the dead in the hues of life."

There can be little doubt but that dreams leave an impress "upon our waking thoughts," and that they "make us what we were not—what they will." Even in our more refined social conditions we are never able to quite shake off their effect and are perpetually drawing from them very much the same conclusions as did our uncivilized ancestors.

In somewhat this fashion did primitive man attempt to solve the still all-absorbing problem, "Does a man die but to live again?" After thousands of centuries of inquiry, this momentous question remains unanswered by science. An impassable barrier of unbroken silence is still upreared between the quick and the dead; for though love and hope have together created fair fields of beatitude in some fairy-like region far, far beyond the dread rampart, yet to the student of physical reality there comes no answer from beyond the barrier. All through the ages the cry of the survivor has been—

> "O! for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still."

There is stoicism in the mere act of living—

> ". . . Men must endure
> Their going hence even as their coming hither;"

and yet there seems to be "a still, small voice" in every man which whispers to him that his account is not closed at death, but that at birth a portion, however microscopic, of the already existing universal intelligence is imparted to him, and that this, when existence here is over, returns again to the fountain from which it emanated. The inscrutable energy pervading the universe, as disclosed to us by science, differs profoundly from the ideas held of any God worshipped by any now existing religious denomination.

Nowadays Death, to many, is no longer regarded as the King of Terrors—

> "Death, when unmasked, shows us a friendly face,
> And is a terror only at a distance."

Death is looked on rather as a kindly nurse, who haps us in our narrow bed when we go to sleep, tired with our day's work. One may say, in the words of a great man gone before, "It is well even if the sleep be endless." Annihilation is, however, not a pleasing sleep without a dream, but is rather, as defined by Dr. Johnston, "neither pleasing, nor sleep; it is nothing. Now mere existence is so much better than nothing, that one would rather exist in pain than not exist." The doctor evidently preferred the prospective pains of Hell to annihilation.

Next to death, sleep is the greatest of mysteries—

> "How wonderful is Death—
> Death and his brother, Sleep!"

Is the intelligence that dreams the same intelligence that governs the body when awake? The latter governs the mind when the mind is awake. The mind, or imagination, acts without control when asleep, but the brain continues to act automatically; hence the cause of erratic and unconnected dreams. It appears, then, that the brain does not originate, but merely transmits, thought; for when not under waking control it may again and again transmit these already registered thoughts. When we enter the dream state we lose something which returns to us in our waking hours. When the body enters the temporary death of sleep consciousness is dethroned; the moment the body re-awakens consciousness returns to its seat. We know that consciousness is able, day by day, to leave the body and return. Therefore, when the body is no longer tenantable, we hope consciousness may be able to continue to exist elsewhere.

We cannot somehow realise that our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, our loves and hates, are all to end in nought—that those we loved in this world, whom even the Pagan Seneca describes as, "Not lost, but gone before," are never to be seen by us again; that those we hated, and who wronged us, are never to be at our mercy; that mind, intellect, memory, are all to be absorbed in a material world. One revolts at the very idea; but that does not make the idea either true or false. Is it or is it not true that—

> "We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep"?

The idea of the immortality of the soul is far more widely spread than the existence of one or more Gods; for the most degraded tribes, even those on the lowest rung of the ladder of civilization, incapable of the smallest mental advance, even unable to draw self-suggestive inferences, are nevertheless found to believe implicitly in the perpetuation of life after death. But

the very general, almost universal, belief in a future state of existence cannot be adduced as evidence of its truth. The aborigines of California, who, when first known, were little removed from wild beasts, and whom the missionaries likened to "herds of swine," possessed not the faintest idea of a God or Gods; yet they had a vague notion of an after-life, for a writer who draws this dark picture of their condition adds that he saw them frequently placing shoes on the feet of the dead, which demonstrated that they entertained some idea of a journey undertaken by the spirit of the deceased after death. The natives of Australia, who were quite as debased, believed that after death their souls mounted to the clouds or crossed the ocean to a distant land.

The idea—or shall we say doctrine?—of the immortality of man's spirit or soul has taken many different forms in a gradual scale of development. In the first stage the spirit becomes a malignant being; in the second it enjoys a continuous life, as on earth; thirdly, it advances to the metempsychosis and to cyclical life; fourthly, it develops into a superior spirit, as in more advanced religions, and in the Christian ideal.

Fig. 93.
Soul rejoining the Dead Body. From the *Book of the Dead* (the Egyptian Bible).

In one of the numerous chapters of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the Priestly Official Guide, or Manual to Spirit-Land, which treats of the rejoining of the soul to the mummified body in the underground world, there is an illustration of the soul, in the form of a semi-butterfly-like looking creature bearing a sail, the emblem of breath, and the *Crux ansata*, that of life, in the act of revisiting its former tabernacle (fig. 93). We have a body and a spirit, but theologians have very weak arguments to rely on when they attempt to prove that man is gifted with any third constituent.

In a fragment of an Irish "Vision of Hell," translated by Professor Kuno Meyer (*Otia Merseiana*, vol. i., p. 116)—dating from the fifteenth century, but which is apparently derived from a much more ancient MS.—the following passage occurs: "Then

all at once, he (the cleric) beheld his soul (hovering) over the crown of his head, and knew not which way she had come out of the body."

In a Statistical Account of the Parish of Ballymoyer, county Armagh, written in 1810, the Rev. Joseph Ferguson states that a girl chasing a butterfly was chid by her companion, who said to her, "That may be the soul of your grandfather." Upon inquiry it was found that a butterfly hovering near a corpse was regarded as a sign of its everlasting happiness. This is a curious instance of the lingering on of a pagan superstition.

A very good example of the idea that the soul assumes the form of a butterfly may be instanced in the story of "The Priest's Soul" in Lady Wilde's *Ancient Legends of Ireland*. Unfortunately, she has dressed it up in a rather too modern style; the epilogue is, therefore, only given:—

"The priest lived, though the agony was horrible; for he could not die until the twenty-four hours had expired. At last the agony seemed to cease, and the stillness of death settled on his face. Then the child, who was watching, saw a beautiful living creature, with four snow-white wings, mount from the dead man's body into the air, and go fluttering round his head; so he ran to bring the scholars, and when they saw it they all knew it was the soul of their master, and they watched with wonder and awe until it passed from sight into the clouds.

"And this was the first butterfly that was ever seen in Ireland; and now all men know that the butterflies are the souls of the dead waiting for the moment when they may enter purgatory, and so pass through torture to purification and peace.

"But the schools of Ireland were quite deserted after that time, for the people said, "What is the use of going so far to learn when the wisest man in all Ireland did not know if he had a soul till he was near losing it, and was only saved at last through the simple belief of a little child?"

In some parts of Ireland the soul is supposed after death to remain in the form of a butterfly, or of a small bird, in the neighbourhood of the body, and then to follow it to the grave. The Bulgarians also hold that it assumes the form of a butterfly, and remains in close proximity to the corpse until the funeral is over. The Servians believe that the soul of a witch often leaves her body whilst she is asleep, and flies abroad in the shape of a butterfly. The same belief prevails in some of the islands of the Pacific. The idea that the soul assumes this shape is, therefore, by no means confined to Ireland. It was rife in ancient and classic days; whilst in modern times Pope's idea of the "Dying Christian's Address to his Soul" was suggested by the exquisite and beautiful apostrophe of Adrian to his soul,

composed in his dying moments, and recorded by his historian, Spartianus, as expressive of the Emperor's uncertainty as to a future existence:—

> "Animula, vagula, blandula!
> Hospes, comesque corporis."*

According to Mr. T. F. T. Dyer, the country-people in Yorkshire "used to call, and even now occasionally do so, night-flying white moths, 'souls.'"

In Gloucestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Somersetshire, there still exist numerous superstitions regarding butterflies.

An Irish fairy doctor could easily detect if a man had lost his soul. If he had been bargaining with evil spirits the compact was readily detected, as at noonday, and even in the brightest sunshine, his body, demoniacally possessed, cast no shadow. Is there here not the implied belief that the shadow was a man's second self, his spirit? There are two problems, the solution of which has been attempted in all ages, in all creeds, alike by the savage and the philosopher, to ourselves still the most important and interesting that can be proposed, namely—Do we continue to exist after death, and if so how?

In proportion as civilization rises, religion also attains a higher level. The gradual amelioration in religious ideas should be gauged, not so much by the outward object worshipped, as by the conception of the Deity or deities, in the mind of the worshippers. There is at first an absence of all definite ideas on the subject of a deity; then a stage, sometimes styled Fetichism, is reached in which the worshipper believes he can control the material object or objects worshipped, and compel them to comply with his wishes. When they do not appear to act in accordance with his demands, he deposes them from being his gods and chooses others—a trait still characteristic of human nature.† This cult develops

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> * "Dear fluttering, fleeting soul of mine,
> Thou guest and companion of the body."

† In the year 1899, the salmon fishing at Tacoma, Washington, was very bad. The local Chinamen engaged in the industry with a view to mending matters, held a religious festival for a fortnight and prayed to their Joss, but there was no improvement in the take of fish. They accordingly determined on another course. Seeing that their devotions were useless, and that so much time had been unprofitably spent, they wrecked the Joss house, dethroned their Joss from his position in his temple, tied a rope about him, dragged him through the streets and chopped him into atoms. The orthodox Chinese opposed these violent measures, but the indignant fishermen would not be prevented.

Dans un convent à Paris, St. Joseph n'avait pas exaucé les demoiselles qui lui avaient demandé de leur accorder un beau jour pour leur excursion. La religieuse avait mis La Sainte Image dans un placard, et disait, "Mesdemoiselles ne regardez pas Saint Joseph, il est en pénitence."

Un paysan de Naples, sa femme étant en mal d'enfant, priait son saint de

into the adoration of natural objects; finally the objects worshipped become more powerful than man, and are accessible only through a restricted caste or class of people. This stage seems to have been the acme of religious worship in ancient Ireland. Experience has shown that it easily glides into an idolatry not unlike that of the earlier stage. From it is developed the theology of the present, where the Deity is an impeccable and altogether supernatural being.

Irish Palæolithic man with his religion, if he possessed any, has vanished, leaving little trace. Neolithic man believed in a future state resembling that passed by him on earth, as is witnessed by the articles buried with his dead; and this belief probably developed finally into some dim conception of a future spiritual life:—

> "Here bring the last gifts and with these
> The last lament be said,
> Let all that pleased, and yet may please,
> Be buried with the dead.
>
> Beneath his head the hatchet hide,
> That he so stoutly swung;
> And place the boar's fat haunch beside;
> The journey hence is long."

Fictile vessels, containing a supply of food for the departed, were placed beside him for sustenance during his long journey to the land of spirits, to

> "The undiscovered country from whose bourn
> No traveller returns."

On the non-return of the traveller, Shakspeare is very positive;

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faire cesser ses douleurs. A la fin il perd patience, met le feu au derrière du saint. Sa femme accouche, et il s'écrie, "Ah, tu m'écoutes, maintenant que tu sais ce que c'est."

Mr. F. T. Bullen writing on "Sea Superstitions" in *The Spectator*, 22nd July, 1899, draws attention to the fact that it is an unheard of misdemeanour on board ship to destroy or put to common use any paper on which "good words" are printed. "The man guilty of such an action would be looked upon with horror by his shipmates, although their current speech is usually vile and blasphemous beyond belief. And herein is to be found a curious distinction between seamen of Teutonic and Latin race, excluding Frenchmen. Despite the superstitious reverence the former pay to the written word, none of them would in time of peril dream of rushing to the opposite extreme, and after madly abusing their Bibles, throw them overboard. But the excitable Latins, after beseeching their patron saint to aid them in the most agonising tones, repeating with frenzied haste such prayers as they can remember, and promising the most costly gifts in the event of their safely reaching port again, often turn furiously upon all they have previously been worshipping, and with the most horrid blasphemies vent their rage upon the whilom object of their adoration. Nothing is too sacred for insult, no name too reverend for abuse, and should there be, as there often is, an image of a saint aboard, it will probably be cast into the sea." See also *ante*, p. 68, line 28.

not so the ancient Irish, nor indeed the poet Horace, from whom England's bard appears to have borrowed the idea :—

> "Qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum
> Illuc unde negant redire quenquam."*

By the same process of reasoning we conclude that Neolithic man believed that his womankind also entered into a future state ; for in graves we discover all kinds of female ornaments, rings, ear- or nose-rings, pierced animal teeth and bones, combs, stones, strings of shells, and in later times beads of amber and other gauds. This is to be attributed to the same unconscious process of reasoning that, in the present day, makes the bereaved parents often place a child's toys in the coffin with the infant, the afflicted parents quite naturally imitating the old pagan custom of placing trinkets with the dead to amuse them on their long journey.

The primitive savage had to content himself, however, with decorations of a very simple description : trophies of the chase, shells and ornaments wrought from stone and bone did duty for what is now represented by precious metals or the skill of the lapidary. Judging by the amount of gewgaws discovered with interments, and accompanied by flints or other weapons, it would appear as if inordinate vanity was not confined to the fair sex, but that the males of ancient Erin were as proud of what was, in their eyes, finery, as were the females. Possibly this is yet the case, for the love of man for showy uniforms and clothes seems to find its analogy in the feathered kingdom in the bright plumage of the male bird. Carlyle remarks that "the first spiritual want of barbarous man is decoration" ; indeed, personal ornaments are amongst the earliest suggestions of vanity, whether in the race or in the individual. It is a question, which may be left open to keen archæologists to debate, as to nose-rings or ear-rings, being more ancient than bracelets or necklaces ; for the most degraded savages rejoice in the string of shells that circle their necks, quite as much as do the ladies of the ballroom in the circlets of gold that pass through their ears. Although, according to our great poet, Eve in Paradise

> "Her unadorned golden tresses wore
> Dishevelled."

or, in more modern version, had "her golden hair hanging down her back," he should also have depicted her, after the Fall, as adopting, with clothes, the wearing of ornaments, together with nose- and ear-rings.

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* "Who now is travelling along the shaded path, to the spot from which, they say, no one ever returns."

The old inhabitants of the land were at one stage ancestor worshippers, and their religion consisted in communion with the dead and offerings to them, for the worship of the dead is undoubtedly universal, and the stages of the development of the religious idea, from the germ to full-fledged modern theology, are as well marked as are the successive forms assumed by the fœtus.

In the thought of early men, the ghosts of their ancestors were, in a general way, friendly; the ghosts of members of other tribes were, taken as a whole, inimical; for, except with men of his own tribe, primitive man lived in a state of isolation: he was unsociable, and feared and hated other men; hence, probably, the origin of good and evil spirits. In fact the Irish aborigines possessed the fundamental beliefs held by primitive mankind throughout the globe—the simple creed of the savage who believes very firmly in the existence of bad spirits, and less firmly, or not at all, in the existence of good spirits, and who hopes to attain to another and pleasurable existence where the future will be spent in an enjoyable manner—practically indeed, the same creed as that held by a present-day child before these rudimentary notions are supplemented by developed orthodox theological training.

Certain ceremonies were, however, devised to control the unruly dead. For instance, after the battle of Sligo, fought in A.D. 537, Eoghan Bel, King of Connaught, being mortally wounded, directed that after death he was to be interred at Rathoveeragh, near Sligo, in a standing position, his blood-stained javelin in his hand, his face turned towards Ulster, as if still fighting with his enemies. His instructions were carried out, and the result was that, as long as the body was left in this position the Connaughtmen were invincible, and the men of Ulster always fled before them in terror. At length the latter, learning the cause of their defeat, disinterred the corpse, and carrying it northward over the river of Sligo, buried it head downwards, so as to counteract the talismanic effect of its previous underground attitude. It is curious that in some parts of the country the peasantry still retain a dim traditional memory of this mode of sepulture, the reversal of the usual position of a warrior in his last resting place, and of the superstition connected with it. In the parish of Errigal, county Derry, is a locality styled "The Dwarf's Tomb." This dwarf was a magician who perpetrated great cruelties and was slain by Finn MacCool. He was buried in a standing position, but the following day he appeared in his old haunts more cruel and more vicious than ever. Finn slew him a second time and buried him as before, but again he emerged from the grave and spread terror through the country.

Finn thereupon consulted a Druid, and, by his instructions, he slew the magician a third time, and buried him in the same place, head downwards, which device subdued the magical power, so that the dwarf never again appeared on earth.

The custom of interring kings and chiefs in a standing position is referred to in Irish tales. King Leoghaire would not allow himself to be converted to Christianity, but was buried, like a grand old Pagan, in the external rampart of Tara, in military harness, weapon in hand, his face turned southwards towards his enemies, the men of Leinster, as if fighting with them and bidding them defiance.

The Irish of this period believed that their dead, though deposited underground, still lived the same life as on earth. This idea is exemplified in the story of the "Cave of Ainged," preserved in several MSS. The plot is as follows: Ailell and the celebrated Medb, King and Queen of Connaught, were celebrating the feast of Samain, one November night, in their palace of Croghan. On that night the spirits inhabiting the tombs and other localities were allowed to emerge from their retreats and to run to-and-fro upon the earth. This superstitious idea is universally crystallized in so-called Christian belief; Shakspeare describes—

> " . . . the very witching time of night,
> When churchyards yawn and Hell itself breathes out
> Contagion to the world."

To test the valour of his household, the King offered a suitable reward to any young warrior who would sally from the banqueting-hall and tie a coil of twisted twigs upon the leg of a man whom he had caused to be hanged, and who was then suspended just outside the palace.

The only one who attempted it was a hero named Nera; but on completion of the act the hanged man came to life and imposed numerous commands (*geis*)* on his resuscitator, who was forced to comply with them all. When released from his task, he saw the palace of Croghan in flames and a host of strange men plundering the buildings. He followed them into the cave or souterrain of Croghan, was immediately taken prisoner, kept at hard work, and compelled to marry one of the women of the place. He finally managed to escape to upper air, and returned to the King of Connaught with such an amount of information regarding the cave and its contents, that, on a succeeding Samain, or November night, earthly forces broke into the treasure-house of the underground spirit world, and carried off great booty and costly treasure.

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* See *ante*, p. 56.

Even the Greek mind did not rise to the conception that the soul after death might become a greater spirit power than when on earth, or that it could exist without a physical body. Their departed lived, like the characters presented in the Irish legend, the life they had been accustomed to on earth, and hankered after the fleshpots of the upper world.

When we reach the period of written records, we find the idea of a spirit or soul coming into existence, but it cannot even then be quite divorced from the body. In "The pursuit of Dermod and Grania," Aengus, the magician, arrived on the scene after the hero's death, and carried the corpse from the heights of Benbulbin to "the Brugh on the Boyne," explaining his action by stating, that although he could not restore Dermod to life, he would send a soul into him so that he would be able to talk for a brief period every day.* This strange passage is also elucidatory of the constant communication carried on between the abodes of the living and of the dead. The old pagans imagined existence after death as a mere slightly differentiated prolongation of earthly life; and how could they reason otherwise, knowing, as they did, nothing about any actual state of existence other than on earth. The crude and materialistic notions of a future state, still held in the present day, will indubitably be gradually corrected and idealised. We shall no longer believe that another life simply means a useful opportunity of wearing out one's old clothes. Dust we are, and to dust we return, but the return is final, in so far as the personality bound up with the dust is concerned. Even now, we do not know that the dead are held, by even the frailest link, to those they loved on earth, nor that they are able to take any interest in our welfare, spiritual or temporal. We persuade ourselves to believe that they do take an interest in us, because it would be heart-rending to think otherwise, but a question of scientific fact cannot be solved by an impassioned appeal to feelings engendered by old beliefs. Ever since man became a reasoning being his plaint has been "there comes no whisper of reply."

An aperture left in the side stones of a sepulchre, the enclosing of a funeral urn in a clay cylinder, or the fracturing of the base of the vessel when reversed to cover the ashes of the dead—instances of which have been found in prehistoric interments in Ireland—point to a very late period, when the dead having, in the thought of the living, become a spirit, an exit was left for that spirit; in the same way that, in some districts, after a death has occurred, the window or door of the room which contains the corpse is thrown open, so that the spirit

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* See *ante*, p. 134, line 9.

may not be compelled to make its exit by the chimney flue. The mind of uncultured man, is after all, from a modern standpoint, not quite strictly logical, and there is, to him, nothing strange in an act that provides a material mode of exit for that which is immaterial. The well-known superstition of opening the door to let the spirit out, has been taken advantage of by Sir Walter Scott in his tale of *Guy Mannering*, when he makes Meg Merrilees act in this manner. While watching at the bedside of the dying man she exclaims, "He cannot pass away with that on his mind, it tethers him here, I must open the door," and withdrawing a bolt, she lifts the latch, exclaiming,

> "Open lock, end strife;
> Come death, and pass life."

In his *Mountain Muse*, published in 1814, J. Tain thus refers to the same ceremony:—

> "The chest unlocks to ward the power
> Of spells in Mungo's evil hour."

This superstition originated in the idea that demons (in modern times exclusively the Christian Devil) seized the soul as it left the body, and crushed it against a closed door or window—which alone can serve the demons' purpose. They thrust it into the hinges, or into the crevices of the window, and the soul is crushed and tortured by every movement of the shutting or opening of a door or window. An open door or window frustrates this purgatorial performance, and friends of the departed have the consolation of knowing that, by thus leaving them ajar, they are not made the unconscious instruments of torturing the beloved departed.

The German peasant says "that it is wrong to slam a door lest one should pinch a soul in it." The same idea is common in France. The Chinese make a hole in the roof to let out the departing soul; whilst the negroes of the Congo have a very dirty but religious custom of abstaining, for twelve months after a death, from sweeping out the house that belonged to the dead, lest the dust thus raised should annoy the ghost.

In Ireland it would appear as if, on the departure of the dead man's soul from its clayey envelope, it is free to do as it likes; sometimes it wanders to-and-fro in the vicinity of the place inhabited by it in life; it may flit about in the air; it may linger near the tomb; or it may set out at once to travel to the world beyond the grave. Thus the Irish peasant still imagines that not alone do demons continually hover all around him, but

the dead also; and these two apparently distinct classes of apparitions are, in his imagination, inexplicably jumbled up together. The deeply rooted impression of the continual presence of the spirits of the departed is part of his unprofessed creed, in which, however, he thoroughly believes. He is quite happy, in his way, in this ideal world of his own—or rather of his remote ancestors'—creation, in living in an atmosphere of "Celtic Twilight," with its shadowy and none too agreeable citizens. He is reticent in divulging old beliefs; he cherishes what the past has handed down to him in the deepest secrecy, and his mind is stored with what his forefathers did. Question him, however, about a superstition, and his answers are palpable evasions.

The interment of the dead, is one of the most distinctive marks of the human animal. None of the brute creation, not even those who approach the nearest to man in exhibition of affection, evince a care for the interment of the body once life has departed. Respect for the mere body, when deprived of life, rests on convictions, sentiments, and beliefs, the gradual building of many thousand years of thoughtful reflection.

The important position ascribed to goddesses, in ancient Irish religious belief, is very noticeable, and was doubtless owing, at least in part, to the associations of maternity, and the train of thought following therefrom. Think what we may of sex-worship, and however repulsive to present day ideas it may appear, it was nevertheless not only an ancient form of worship, but was also one of the most natural ways of expressing the ideas of creation, of renewal, and reproduction. It is not to be judged by modern standards, the people and the surroundings of their times must be considered when we endeavour to form a just estimate of customs once common.

"Is it strange," writes a lady, "that they regarded with reverence the great mystery of human birth? Were they impure thus to regard it? Or are we impure that we do not so regard it? Let us not smile at their mode of tracing the infinite and incomprehensible cause throughout all the mysteries of nature, lest by so doing, we cast the shadow of our own grossness on their patriarchal simplicity." It is extraordinary that there are a large number of otherwise intelligent people who do not possess the power of discriminating between what merely sounds profane and what is really profane.

In later times Christian ecclesiastics were not slow to avail themselves of a means, ready at hand, of adding to their reputation and influence, and supplementing their revenues. Women, who for some cause or another had hitherto been without offspring, were encouraged to continue the ancient custom of visiting

the sacred pagan "beds," making proper offerings and going through the prescribed ceremonies.*

Supernatural generation is a very old as well as a very wide-spread idea. For instance the native black women of Australia believe conception to take place sometimes supernaturally and quite independently of marriage.

Rapid development in religious ideas only occurred at an advanced stage of mental expansion, when savage man had, to a certain extent, ceased to ascribe to material objects a life analogous to that of animated nature, and gods and goddesses were regarded as semi-spiritual beings, and as the origin, as well as the guardians or rulers, of the tribe. At this stage the god or goddess and the worshippers formed a natural unity bound up with the district they occupied. The dissolution of the tribe destroyed the tribal religion, and destroyed the tribal deity, the god or goddess could no more exist without its tribe than the tribe without its deity. But one has to be very guarded when making generalisations as to the religious past of the aborigines, for, as a rule, the masses of mankind neither rise to, nor descend to the acknowledged precepts of their faith, they do not live up to the best parts of a good religion, nor do they descend to the depths of the worst parts of, what we may consider, a bad religion. It has been remarked that Christians do not rise to the level of their founder, nor are heathens as depraved as, upon the Christian theory, they ought to be.

The total absence from Ireland of relics of anything that would seem to our eyes to have been an idol (we except from this the idol-, pillar- or holed-stones of a latter date), the total absence of visible symbols of spirit-like or material beings is almost conclusive evidence that the natives possessed no materialised representations of anthropomorphic deities. Does it not afford grave food for reflection that, with a most thoughtfully displayed care in providing for the future of the dead, there should have been no material personification of a deity, or deities, until the introduction of Christianity? In this respect mental childhood rises superior to the Christian creed, for it clothes the idea of a deity or deities, with vagueness, and does not attempt to impersonate them. The best executed and most artistic statues of the old Roman gods are the product of an age of wide-spread infidelity,

* See vol. i., pp. 348–349, also under "Marriage-lore," "Well-," and "Stone-worship." The superstition existed with quite as much strength in England. In the vestry of Jarrow Church, Northumberland, the rude but substantial oaken chair of the Venerable Bede is preserved, to which brides repair immediately the marriage service is concluded, and seat themselves upon it. This act, according to popular belief, will make them the "joyful mother of children"; in fact, not long ago, most brides would not have considered the marriage ceremony completed unless they had gone through this performance.

for when they were sincere believers in their deities, the Latins possessed but an indifferent statuary, and Seneca observes that the primitive clay statuettes were much more propitious than those of marble, and were certainly worshipped with greater fervour.

It seems that, at a certain stage in all religions, there is a natural tendency to worship, or venerate, tangible images of supposed superior spirit-like beings. The cult may take a longer or shorter period to develop, it may when developed be suppressed, but it possesses great vitality and there appears to be an inherent desire in the human breast to revive gross material worship and idolatry.

Idolatry and idolator are terms applied in a general way to very different things. An idolator, strictly speaking, may be defined as a person who worships an image, which the worshipper veritably believes to be itself conscious and powerful for both good and evil. Many Christians unconsciously practise what may fairly be described as idolatry, *i.e.*, they look upon the image as a visible representation of the invisible being addressed, but few can, strictly speaking, be defined as idolators. According to Miss Kingsley, the well-known African traveller, even in Fetichism it is not the material object that the more intelligent negro worships, but the spirit which he supposes dwells in it. If this be the case, much otherwise unintelligible becomes intelligible. This may be pressed further, for it is true of most of the heathen that few amongst them believe the actual image to be endowed with consciousness. The Rev. E. Taylor tells us that in image worship, as observed by him on an Island in the Pacific Ocean, the *Atua* (spirit or god) was supposed only to enter the image for the occasion. "The natives declare they did not worship the image itself, but only the Atua it represented and that the image was merely used as a way of approaching him." Nam Deus est quod imago docet, sed non Deus ipsa, hanc cernas sed mente colas quod cernis in ipsa.

The Church of Ireland forbids its members to hold that God has parts and passions like themselves, though as He is worshipped in the Prayer Book, many prayers appear to be departures from this injunction; but the Christian differs from the heathen in this, that his God is to some extent a mental, that of the heathen a material image. This may be explained, at least in part, by observing that the language of devotion must always be largely the language of poetry, and that it is impossible to form any idea of God without calling anthropomorphism to our aid. Still a similar observation would go a long way in explaining, or justifying, heathen methods of worship.

The individual man makes God after his individual imagina-

tion. We each worship a God of our own. There is a great foundation of truth in the grim jest "that if God made man in his own image, man does as much by him."

> "The Ethiop's gods have Ethiop eyes,
> Bronze cheeks and woolly hair:
> The gods of Greece were like the Greeks,
> As keen and cold and fair."

As a French writer has wittily observed, "if the Triangles had a God, he would be three-sided," and Goethe remarks that "Man never knows how anthropomorphic he is."

The warrior-like nature of the Scandinavian gods reflects the characteristics of their worshippers; the solitude of the desert welded the Arab into a monotheist. In fact it may be said that the development of the religious germ depends, to a great extent, on the nature of the people, on the natural features and geology of the country more than on political surroundings and social habits, and its growth is accelerated or retarded by those diurnal agencies which control the progress of mental expansion. Thus, the study of the mythological creed of the inhabitants of any land offers a wide and tempting subject to the inquirer.

Diodorus describing the customs of the Druidical priesthood designates them "Saruides," and, according to Dr. P. W. Joyce, the Irish peasantry still apply the term *sean-druid*, *i.e.* an old Druid, to a crabbed cunning old man. Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, xvi. 95) derives the word "Druid" from δρῦς, an oak; some connect it with *darach*, the Celtic for that tree. It is alleged that when an oak died, the Druids stripped off the bark, and shaped it into a pillar, pyramid, or cross, and continued to worship it as an emblem of the God. In the Latin Lives of SS. Patrick and Columbkille the Druids are styled "Magi." In Bishop Bedell's translation of the Bible into Irish, Simon Magus (heading, Acts ix.) is rendered "Simon the Druid," *Siomon an draoi*: v. 9, "used sorcery," *do bhí na dhraoi*: v. 11, "with his sorceries," *na dhraoidheachd*. The old school of Irish antiquarians imagined they saw a Druid in every bush. This led to an inevitable reaction, and now, probably, many people believe that Druidism had no footing in the land. Yet numerous singular customs exist which must have originated from a religious idea. The religious aspect of the rites has been gradually obscured, and in some cases finally lost, but the customs have been carried on, in almost stereotyped form, from the days in which they were practised by mere savages. If these customs be compared with those described in the passages illustrative of rites and observances in ancient Irish MSS, there will probably be discovered for us the entire secret

of the religious system of our heathen ancestors, and we shall see disclosed the means by which the early Christian Church in Ireland dissolved and absorbed the old Pagan Pantheon—a comparatively easy task, for the latter consisted, as we have seen, of a number of supernatural beings without bond, without cohesion, not held together by any apparent principle and without a great All-Father, an Odin, or a Jove.

This colourless religion, this worship of a host of single spirits without marked individuality, would fully account for the comparatively easy abandonment of the uninteresting divinities. On the other hand, the gods of the Saxons, in the minds of whose ancestors they had originated, possessed a marked individuality which forcibly appealed to the idiosyncracies of the race, so that an effacement of their gods seemed to the Saxons to be a voluntary abandonment of their own kingdom and of their own power which were to be handed over to the guidance of a stranger god, and this revolution was therefore not effected without a bitter and prolonged struggle.

It was, however, not uncommon for one religion to adopt the gods of another. Even Judaism seems to have done this in a modified manner. Welhausen translates Psalm xxix. 1, "Ascribe to JHVH, ye sons of God, ascribe to JHVH honour and praise," and he remarks on the passage :—"Judaism has turned the heathen gods into angels, commissioned by JHVH to govern the various nations." The earlier idea may possibly have been, that JHVH was the supreme god under whom the gods of the peoples exercised a delegated power. According to a very learned and entirely "orthodox" writer JHVH is to be identified, or rather His origin is to be traced, to Ea, or Ya, or Sin, the moon-god of Babylonia. Another and probably a clearer instance of the influence exercised on Judaism by heathen thought, is to be noted in connexion with the cherubim. The cherub of Christian art is not the cherub of the Old Testament. Painters have derived their idea from Cupid, but there can be little doubt that the Cherub of the Bible is, in its original, the winged bull of Assyria.

Traces of the Elder faiths of Ireland have been described as far as our present knowledge permits, as also the distinct indications of the long-continued struggle between Christianity and Paganism, the former gradually overcoming the latter, and, in popular usage, adopting much from the conquered faith. Such is almost invariably the case, more especially when the conquerors are numerically inferior to the conquered. Owing to the wild and unsettled condition of the country, teachers must have been scarce, and there could not have been that oversight from any responsible and restraining authority which would keep the

standard of Christian doctrine pure amongst the various warring tribes.

The so-called Irish alphabet, introduced by the early Christian missionaries, is composed of the ordinary cursive characters used in everyday transactions of the Roman literature of the first centuries of the Christian era; a sentence in Irish characters might be easily mistaken for a copy of the scratchings of a popular phrase, or catch sentence, many of which may be seen scrawled on the walls of the buried villas and buildings of Herculaneum and Pompeii, and elsewhere. This running hand differs considerably from the familiar square-shaped letters of Roman lapidary inscriptions, and it is a misnomer to designate it "Irish."

Christianity, coming as it did with a superior civilization, must have early forced its way into a recognised place. But after its initial successes, it would, for a time, be barely tolerated and forced to propagate itself almost in secret. At this stage there would, doubtless, be a careful concealment from catechumens of much of its teaching (a course of conduct borrowed from paganism with its mysteries) which would gradually be conveyed to them when they became *illuminati*, or initiates into the Christian mysteries. They would now learn, probably for the first time, that their former gods were regarded by their teachers as devils. In a later stage the two religions would be on an equality of popular influence; and, finally, the religion of the more civilized would attain ascendancy, and, as far as circumstances permitted, endeavour, by persecution, to stamp out the conquered faith. In this onward course it merely followed the natural order of events and the bent of human nature in all ages, whether regarded from a religious, political, or moral standpoint. Christian theology, however, is, now-a-days, gradually purifying itself from the physical force with which it formerly associated itself; like modern science it is re-adjusting itself to what alone can stand the test of criticism; but in former days,

> "Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded
> That all the apostles would have done as they did."

Creeds:—

> "There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds."

For creeds (if correct synopses) bear somewhat the relation to religion and to the scriptures, that a small scale map does to a continent, or rather, as Ptolemy's Map of Ireland (see *ante*, vol. i., fig. 75) to a well-finished work of the present century, or to put it in another way, the creeds bear the same relation to the truths they are supposed to express, as do the rude attempts

of a child to the finished works of a trained artist. The works of the old Fathers, and of some of their modern imitators, may remain, as monuments, to show posterity over what trifles (*i. e.* trifles, as regarded from a strictly non-theological standpoint) men wrangled, fought, and slew each other for the greater honour and glory of their Creator; whilst incorporated pagan theology, with its accompanying rites and ceremonies, will serve, for all time, as a beacon to the antiquarian explorer in his researches on religious evolution.

Through the ages the progress of the great battle against compulsory ignorance, for free thought and for free knowledge, has been very slow; but great minds have waged the prolonged, and, at times, apparently hopeless contest, and, little by little, have added to the range of what may be publicly discussed without fear of legal penalties being inflicted by either Church or State. Science has never sought to advance her cause by alliance with the civil power, and is unstained by crimes; but in the name of religion numbers of people, innocent of any offence, have been socially ruined, mentally and physically tortured, and have welcomed death as a release from sufferings inflicted in the name of the founder of the Christian Church.

Christianity by setting itself to dissipate, where it could not absorb, the ancient mythology, and by inculcating an introspective and narrow habit of thought, was antagonistic to the growth of a love of nature and of its mysteries; but now the wonders which science has revealed, afford a fresh field to the imagination. What has been observed, by some thoughtful writers, of the Christian religion in Ireland in the present century would, if uttered by an Irish pagan of the fifth century, have been equally applicable, namely, that it cannot well be done without, but that, as it is, it cannot be universally accepted; its outward aspect must, to some extent, change with the times, for the great reserve of adaptability to the circumstances of the age with which it is endowed, is its great source of strength, and a good guarantee of its practical perpetuity.

The stride from "there is no such God as is now preached," to "there is no God," though apparently simple, is not easily made, but it is frequently brought about by the narrowness and arrogance of pulpit discourses, which force scientifically trained minds into active opposition, and do violence to the common sense of even the wayfaring man.

In the case of our remote forefathers, religion commanded their faith and subjugated their reason; to our fathers it became a dogma; to many of the present generation it is a mighty problem which invites solution; for we have arrived at a very unsatisfactory stage in mental expansion. We may be described

as having attained the position pathetically described by Hood in the following lines :—

> "I remember, I remember,
> The fir trees, dark and high ;
> I used to think their slender tops,
> Were close against the sky ;
> It was a childish ignorance,
> But now 'tis little joy,
> To know I 'm further off from Heaven,
> Than when I was a boy."

"Revealed religion commands our faith and subjugates our reason ; science requires freedom of search, and appeals to facts." Froude remarks that : "If I may judge from the prevailing tone of modern popular literature, from the loud avowals of incredulity on one side, the lamentations on the other, on the spread of infidel opinions, it seems as if, after sixteen hundred years of satisfied belief which came in with Christianity, we were passing once more into a cycle of analogous doubts ; the sentiments of so robust a thinker as Lucian, under the same trials, are the footprints of a friend who has travelled before us the road on which we are entering."

Lucian, who lived in the second century, was not only a "robust thinker," but a sceptic and a scoffer to boot. The pagan divinities he treated with open derision, Christianity he ignored. There are few finer specimens of humour than his *Dialogue of the Gods*, where he depicts Jupiter as expressing his fear that if the human race lost its faith in the divinities of Olympus, the gods might cease to exist. In this Lucian simply pushed anthropomorphism to a logical conclusion.

The theory of a sudden and complete conversion of Ireland from Paganism to Christianity is incompatible with the survival of so much that is distinctly pagan in the thoughts and practices of the peasantry. There are even, it is alleged, some recorded instances of Irish Christian priests travelling or living on the continent of Europe, before the advent of St. Patrick's mission, some of whom attained to literary and ecclesiastical eminence. Mr. Alfred Nutt, however, does not appear to entertain a high opinion of either the moral or intellectual characteristics of early Irish ecclesiastics, and points out that there was little to choose between the Christian priest and the tribal medicine-man. "A number of stories are extant in which the Irish saints play a part that assorts singularly ill with our idea of the saintly character ; they show themselves vehement and unscrupulous partisans, they resort to trick and dodge to achieve their ends. But the interesting point is, that whilst they approve themselves to be on the same moral level as the pagan Druid, they likewise approve

themselves to be on the same intellectual level. There is the same belief in the irresistible power of formula, in the irrevocable nature of the oath, in the efficacy of symbol and spell." Most legends bear, indeed, witness to the fact that the early Irish saints were "mere tribal medicine-men, with a Christian instead of a pagan bag of tricks." We should look upon them as surviving by sheer force of tradition, "for it is difficult to imagine that centuries after the firm establishment of Christianity, Irish story-tellers went out of their way to vilify their national saints by describing their barbarous acts and their archaic and pre-Christian modes of thought, with which the writers could not possibly have been acquainted." It must, however, in all fairness,

Fig. 94.

Cromleac-like Grave in the County Leitrim.
Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

be stated that contemporaneous documents, or to be more correct, the earliest documents which have come down to us, are, when compared with the more modern, comparatively simple and free from miracle. It is in the biographies, composed some centuries after the saints' deaths, that the above-mentioned characteristics become most apparent. For example, compare St. Patrick's "Confessio" with his life by Jocelin.

In material matters, in sepulture as in religion, one custom glided into the other without any hard dividing line. In many ancient cemetries connected with the earliest monastic establishments in Ireland, graves formed in pagan fashion are of by no

means rare occurrence, demonstrating that, in material as in spiritual matters, there was a gradual and easy transition from one religion to the other. The tombs of the early Christians present a variety of forms, rude sarcophagi resembling cromleacs, cists, or small carns enclosed by a circular wall of uncemented stones. Near the Sugar-loaf Hill a cromleac, it is stated, stands in a churchyard, and there is another cromleac-like grave in a Christian burial place in the county Leitrim (fig. 94).

A hillock in the churchyard of Knock, under the Castlerea hills, marks the site of a demolished cromleac, so that sepulture, in this spot, dates back to pre-historic and pagan times. There is also a fine sepulchral mound not far distant; whether this mound is the "knock" which gives name to the locality, or whether the hill on which the graveyard is placed has a better claim to this title, is a subject open to discussion, but both demolished cromleac and surviving sepulchral mound indicate that the place was a centre for human interment in very early and pre-Christian times. Repeated instances appear to prove the existence of pagan cemeteries, which the early missionaries selected for the burial of their converts. The direction in which these early Christian graves point is generally east and west; but in a cemetery adjoining a very early church at St. John's Point, Co. Down, and also in other localities, the cists are arranged in pagan manner in the form of a circle, *i.e.* in the same position as the tenants assumed in life, when lying stretched before one of their camp fires. For example, a seemingly pagan pillar stone at Kilnasaggart (fig. 95), but now bearing Christian emblems, stands at the northern edge of a circle, formed by numerous low, flat graves, their longer axis pointing towards the centre, with an inner circle of much smaller graves, concentric with the outer circle. At the base of the pillar stone (A) lies a round basin-like stone (B) not unlike, but smaller than those found in the chamber

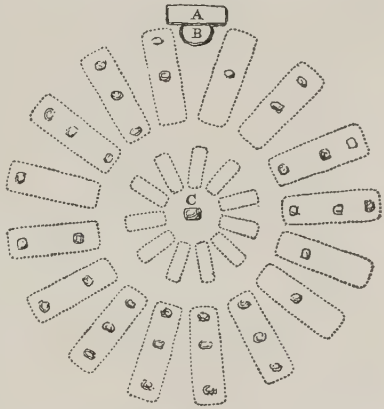

Fig. 95.

Plan of a Pagan Cemetery at Kilnasaggart. Reproduced from the *Journal* of the present Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

of the Grange Carn. The common centre of these two circles of graves is marked by a smaller pillar stone (c).

All this cumulative material, as well as folk-lore evidence, demonstrates that Christianity was, after a time, accepted by the majority of the ancient Irish. "The beautiful and poetical tale of the lovely young Mother with her Child-God, wrought upon the tender feelings in the naturally sympathetic hearts of the Irish, who adopted it readily into their pagan legends, which were not overthrown by it, but on the contrary served as a frame to show off its beauty, and to this very day the old heathen mythology holds its ground with a vitality but little affected by modern ideas or by scientific criticism."

Many writers have described, as special characteristics of the ancient Irish, the qualities of a deep-seated vein of melancholy, a weird imaginativeness joined to this passionate love of the beautiful. But primitive folk living in the midst of nature, and continually witnessing natural phenomena, are bound to be constantly impressed with a sense of nature's mysteries, and this feeling finds crude expression in numerous superstitious observances. These characteristics, however, are no peculiar heritage of the Irish; they merely represent a certain stage in the evolution of most primitive folk, and are found in equal force amidst other and apparently very dissimilar races.

It is a difficult process to trace back to their original source some chains of thought still current, and to see what those ideas, which have revolutionized the world, were like in their infantine beginnings. For in the present day no one can fully understand the mental standpoint, or even the ideas of the civilization on which the ancient inhabitants based their everyday life; primitive man, as a rule, has no wish for change, in fact no ideas enter his head which tend to effect a transformation in his everyday existence.

The transforming motor, in Ireland, came through the introduction of a new religion; its philosophy and classic modes of thought woke the slumbering mass of the unreasoning multitude to new intellectual life.

The force of the current of thought in ancient Greece and Rome seems to have been spent before the introduction of Christianity. Men were feeding, or rather vegetating, upon the past. Christianity came, and with it a period of new life and light, which was in turn overwhelmed by the darkness of the Middle Ages, caused immediately by the break up of the Roman Empire. This Middle Age period of darkness would, however, have been caused more slowly, but as surely, by the exclusive study of the Bible, as then expounded, together with its addenda of voluminous patristic literature. Then came the Saracenic revival of

literature, which more or less permeated Western literature. In a later period came the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, and the flight of Greek scholars to the West, resulting in a European revival of classic art and classic studies, and ultimately in that mighty upheaval of art and of thought called respectively "the Renaissance" and "the Reformation." From these, as a later source, may be traced the genesis of the modern world; from them are derived the forces which have transformed the world, both physically and morally.

In the days of the conversion of Ireland, which process, the reader will bear in mind, was a long and slow one, zealous Christian priests, "Mit Kettenklang und einem neuen Gotte," might induce their converts to pray to the saints; but when the prescribed rite was performed the honest half pagan would turn with affection to the elder hierarchy, and, paradoxical as it may at first sight appear, a singleness of religious feeling was the motor of this seemingly double action, by which he held on to the old faith, while he at the same time embraced, or tried to embrace, the new. Thus the early Christian missionaries, in endeavouring to wean the masses from long-established paganism, did not attack time-honoured usages directly in front, but turned their flank, and instead of exterminating the enemy they only routed and scattered them. Here and there detached bodies remained, which still offered a resolute, though in general passive, resistance; sometimes there occurred a rally, and Christianity was checked in its conquering career. For more than fourteen hundred years there existed two forms of religion, side by side—the traditional creed believed in by the mass of the people, and the worship of those who held the Christian faith. At length the antagonism between the two ceased by the almost entire absorption of the former by the latter, and traces of heathenism are now only to be detected by the differences apparent between the religion of the educated and of the uneducated; for experience demonstrates that primitive beliefs are practically indestructible—new ideas overlie the old, but do not extinguish them. Take, for example, the names of the seven days of the week; every day is dedicated to an old pagan god or goddess. Primitive rights, which have been banished for centuries from religion as publicly practised, are kept alive in local superstitions; for there has never been an epoch in the existence of any race in which all old institutions, all old ideas, have suddenly vanished, yielding place to a brand-new religion. The higher knowledge to which man has now almost universally attained is "an outgrowth from the lower knowledge, and this, like the outcrop of older rocks above the newer rocks, as well as their fusion together, which we see in the crust of the earth, often overlays or is mingled with more modern

beliefs." With unchanged and stereotyped customs and ideas before us for analysis, the past becomes as the present, the present is as the past; the veil which has hitherto shrouded bygone ages is to a great extent lifted; the living become, unconsciously to themselves, witnesses to the correctness of the descriptions of the scenes and ideas of the Eld. Thus, after the marriage ceremony has been performed according to law, traditional custom imposes the performance of certain rites which appear irrational. Hence it is plain that beneath the present-day custom, lie other and more ancient traditional beliefs—waifs drifted down to us along the stream of time from a dim and remote past; but these primitive customs and illusions which long hung on the borders of, but are now more or less incorporated with, present-day religion will in time indubitably die out. They are mere embodiments of man's childlike notions as regards the respect due to the unseen, based upon a worship of the forces of nature. Eventually worship, disregarding tradition, will develop into true religion, and irrational customs and material objects will be disregarded for the adoration of a one and only God. Perhaps the Christian philosopher and seer had caught some glimpse of such a future when he tells us that the heavenly city had "no temple therein."

When an older religion has given place to a younger, the old divinities are apt to be treated in a very cavalier fashion; yet customary observances nevertheless continue. Traces of this are, as we have seen, clearly discernible in popular proverbs, customs, and folk-lore; for worships that contain heathenish elements are to a great extent traditional, and nothing is more foreign to them than the introduction of forms for which there is no precedent.

What is regarded as law at one stage of culture may be looked upon as crime at another. For instance, in ancient Sparta undetected theft was meritorious; in old Scandinavian society the murder of a troublesome rival was looked upon as the proper way of extrication from an awkward predicament. Lacedemonian thief and Scandinavian murderer alike, doubtless, felt the glow of a thoroughly approving conscience, when the former had successfully committed his larceny and the latter had carefully brained his rival; but nowadays these former virtues are, unfortunately, from the point of view of those who practise them, regarded by society in the light of crime, and their perpetrators become, if detected, the prey of the nearest policeman. Customs of the peasantry should be approached in an appreciative spirit, and should be treated on scientific methods. These unadopted waifs are neither recognised by the present dominant Christian religion nor by the law of the land; in fact, they are now to

some extent discountenanced by the former, and are certainly punished by the latter when they run counter to present-day practices. Though essentially the exclusive property of the least cultured portion of the community, it is self-evident that they were not invented by them, but were inherited; for they accord with superstitions and customs prevalent amongst present-day savage tribes, and are, therefore, mere stereotyped fragments of ancient barbaric thought. Students who have undertaken the task of trying to unravel the tangled skein of the religious ideas of savages are of opinion that the ideas of savages, though apparently bordering upon the gruesome or the ridiculous, are in reality far removed from anything of the sort. Generated in a mental atmosphere that we should probably consider as permeated with intense ignorance, the beliefs and practices of savages are nevertheless, according to their ideas, strictly logical, and, when properly analysed and classified, display the principles of their original formation and subsequent development.

Thus an archæological writer brings to the light of day things which would otherwise remain unnoticed, and tries to place an abstruse and dry subject interestingly before the modern reader, who, as a rule, like Gallio of old, cares for none of these things—unless they are written in a popular manner. The archæological writer, must, however, record with amplitude, not only important but also unimportant facts. To do his work properly, an Irish archæological writer must also be a cold scientist, too callous to be affected by the shock, or rather series of shocks, which his opinions, fortified by the production of facts, may have on those reared in the sentimental atmosphere of romantic glamour surrounding the past of human existence in ancient Erin, for archaic life in Ireland can now be traced back to an almost protoplasmic state of society.

From a review of the past, it is apparent that there was a slow but constant progress in the ascending scale of religious as well as of material civilization; no sudden transition from savagery to culture, but an amelioration in the general status of society, which, at the period of the introduction of iron and of Christianity, had placed the inhabitants above the class of many tribes of present-day savages. There is complete continuity in this chain of amelioration—"All things which are now believed to be of the greatest antiquity were once new; and what we now defend by example will one day be quoted as an example." The links in this chain may be thus roughly described: what is ancient becomes venerable, what is venerable becomes holy. The festivals of the Christian Church are traceable to heathen worship; and we shall doubtless some time or another discover

that these were observances borrowed from a remoter past, the faint reflex of another and mysterious genesis.

> "The footprints of an elder race are here,
>
> . . . . .
>
> And shadows of the old mysterious faiths."

Superstitions may be defined as beliefs and practices, which, to the mind of the hearer or beholder, are founded upon what he considers as erroneous conceptions of God and of the—now well known—laws of Nature; for almost every man, no matter how low he may be on the rungs of the ladder of civilization, has his convictions of, what he considers to be, right or wrong.

In the sense of the above definition St. Paul doubtless used the word "superstitious"* when he criticised the astuteness of the philosophic Athenians, desirous of shielding themselves from the anger of any god whom they might have unintentionally neglected to propitiate; but St. Paul's criticism applies not to his age alone, its applicability extends to every age and to every people.

We now-a-days pride ourselves on our freedom from superstition, and are, perhaps, inclined to err in the other extreme. We cast ridicule at "medicine men," quite oblivious of the fact that among us now there are still found, under other names, men who firmly believe that they have power with the unseen, and that they know more about the unknown than has ever been as yet given to man to find out.

Superstition, after all, is primarily a mere rudimentary religious instinct, which is liable to become strangely distorted. It appears as if the germ of the religious idea had been implanted in the human breast; that there is within us a strange blending of the spiritual with the material, and an instinctive feeling that this world of matter is not to bound our existence. There is the greatest difficulty in defining where what may be considered "superstition" ends and where what may be considered "religion" commences. The superstitious or religious instinct is found in almost all mankind. At the head of the evolutionary scale there is a steady and continuous effort to get rid of it; but, except with some strong intellects, this appears to be an impossibility, for even with the most intellectual the superstitious instinct often breaks out in some distorted fashion. On the other hand, at the bottom of the social scale, it it quite possible that there may be some savages of low type guileless of any form of superstition; again, there may be some in whom the

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* Acts xvii. 22, A. V. "too superstitious"; R. V. "somewhat superstitious," margin, or "religious."

germ of superstition is still in protaplasm. A savage who arrives at the lowest stage of superstition has, nevertheless, made a great advance from the mere brute. The savage who sacrifices the tit-bits of the victim of his bow or of his spear to his god, is on a much higher intellectual plane than the savage who devours the carcase without any propitiatory offering, for the slightest intellectual or moral advance is pregnant with promise.

The unsympathetic treatment of superstitions is unphilosophic as well as unscientific; for superstitions are not the swaddling bands of infancy, they may rather be compared to the bark growing on the tree from its infancy and adapting itself to its gradual development and to the growth which it stimulates or causes. The importance of a sympathetic treatment of the relics of ancient Faiths, such as has been attempted, is self-evident to any thinking mind. To the more thoughtful, ancient rites must always have had an esoteric meaning, and the grosser the rite the more the mind must have been fixed on its inner sense.

Thus those who essay to depreciate superstitions in order to exalt Christianity, play a disingenuous role, for there is a germ of truth in them all; and no one can properly weigh the merits of different trains of thought unless he uses the same just balance. It would be fatal, too, for any creed to claim immunity from criticism; Christianity, unless it has greatly changed since its early years, certainly does not do so. It enjoyed no such privilege when it overturned the powerful religions of the ancient world. It was superior to them, and overthrew them on its merits, just as, at a later date, Mahomedanism overthrew heathenism and a very debased form of Christianity. Heathens may be converted to a higher religion; but a greater Faith, such as Christianity or Mahomedanism, taught in childhood and once accepted, is rarely, if ever, conscientiously changed for another.

The growth of Theism as embodied in Christianity, with its hard and fast definitions, its ethical ideas, and its personal relations with a great and only Spirit has gradually developed from a much lower form of belief in the supernatural. The mere tribal God of Israel, the interesting divinities of the Greeks and Romans, with their doubtful morality, the undefinable God of the Vedas, have yielded place to the impeccable but personal God of Christianity, who was described or rather foreshadowed thousands of years ago in the Prophets and in the Psalms, for it was no mere blind chance that shaped the growth of the religion of Israel and finally transformed it into one suitable for all mankind.

The absurd theories started by visionary antiquarians of the last century have greatly retarded the proper study of the ancient religion, or religions, professed by the pre-Christian inhabitants of Erin. Of these writers it may be said, *Quot homines tot*

sententiæ, which can be paraphrased "so many archæologists so many fancies." This school is, however, even yet, not quite extinct, for M. Jubainville, a recent French writer, affirms his belief, in which he is followed by Mr. Yates, that the narratives of the battles between the Dedanann and the Firbolgs are simply twisted and distorted allegories, representing the contests between the powers of Light and Darkness, or of Good and Evil, the former being represented by the Dedanann, the latter by the Firbolgs. The Frenchman. M. Jubainville, will probably keep literary hadesian company (apologies to the shades and to the reader for the use of the adjective which the writer cannot find in the dictionary) with the Englishman, Colonel Vallancey, and the Anglo-Irishman, Mr. Yates, these writers being "more Irish than the Irish themselves." Their *deliramenta doctrinæ* may in weight and importance be compared to the questions once seriously argued amongst schoolmen, one of the most warmly debated being the fixing of the definite number of angels that could, with convenience to themselves, dance on the point of a needle. The proverb which says that "nothing is certain but the unforeseen," was never better exemplified than in the modern resurrection of a school of archæology which died of ridicule nearly a century ago. It is a sign of the times we live in. *Populus vult decipi.* Archæological publications are inundated with an increasing number of contributors sadly wanting in sobriety, breadth, and repose, who revel in extravagant, and even grotesque, idealisms, and the general reading public (*decipiatur*) accepts them at their own valuation.

The difficulty of presenting a clear account of a country's past and unrecorded secular as well as religious history is only too evident, but we have long passed the time when statements are admitted without question simply because they were made at a remote period. The time has gone by when the "history" of the all credulous Keating and the various Irish Annals can be placed as classic works on the level of ancient Greek and Latin histories. A nation's record, however ancient, that is almost entirely occupied with long accounts of mere local struggles is but a poor history indeed, and but little else remains when supernatural occurrences that could never, according to modern science, have happened, are subtracted from the text. We call to mind now-a-days that the so-called "historical" Irish writers were probably often as far, if not indeed farther, removed from the events they pretend to explain than they are from our times. Our more critical age takes account of what may be called the historical perspective; for scepticism has its useful side. We have the mediæval saying:—*Tres medici, duo atheisti*, which may be roughly rendered that any man who is an adept in science or in research makes a bad

churchman, for knowledge begets doubt, and implicit belief shrinks in proportion to its growth. In almost every age of human advancement, there is a sceptical stage; this may be said to be well marked even in the Bible (Ecclesiastes) for scepticism makes its appearance in every period when man commences to reflect on the problem of life, past, present, and to come; and the Preacher, like many modern writers, does not attempt to solve the enigmas he propounds. If it be true that the general idea of religion expands with the intellect; if there be no one final statement of the truth but only provisional enunciations, are not alternations of ages of faith with ages of criticism exactly what might be expected under the circumstances? Certainly the "age of faith" which could accept unquestioned the imaginative statements of mediæval history writers has long passed, and it is by patient work and study of folk-lore, and of the strange waifs which have come down to us from bygone ages, that we may hope to arrive at some idea of the life of prehistoric man.

Our examination of the survival in Ireland of the traces of older faiths than Christianity, in the form of national and traditional folk-lore, may conclude with the summary of this interesting subject, given by the great Irish scholar, O'Donovan:—"I respect it (national traditional lore) as a great influence that has been, and no longer is, or can be. It fed the poetical flame within the people's mind, and was the parent of true poetry in the more cultivated; it nourished the latent instinctive aspirations of the Irish race, gave them aliment, and directed their movements, and rescued their ancestors from the dominion of brutish ignorance; stirred them up with insatiable thirst for true knowledge, which when established on a right basis, will raise this ancient and imaginative people to a truly noble standard among the civilized nations of modern Europe; but its office has been fulfilled; it is no longer necessary to the exigencies of modern society, with which the Irish race must either amalgamate or perish. The only interest it can have is a historical and a poetical one, and most men will acknowledge that nothing can be more interesting to us, in this point of view, than the progress of our ancestors, from rude primeval simplicity, to true civilization and positive science."

Times are indeed changed, and our lines are fallen upon an epoch when gods and saints seem to be disappearing in the present universal swirl and general break-up of all ancient landmarks, beliefs, and systems, for when the divinities have disappeared from Olympus, when the local goddesses have departed, when Hades has lost its terrors, a change of faith is surely impending. Again the awful voice which long ago echoed round the

shores of the central sea, "The great god Pan is dead," gives forth afresh the dreadful news, until the sound reverberates now in every corner of the civilized world. The majority of leading Christian teachers appear to be evolutionists of a more or less pronounced type, and surely there is nothing in Christianity itself, nor in the formulæ of most religious organizations, to prevent their teachers admitting the doctrine of evolution. But to bring themselves within the pale of orthodoxy, evolution must be regarded as arising from the action of an intelligent First Cause. There are few men in whom we can now unsuspectingly trust, either in the religious or political world—in the pulpit few that believe all that they preach—in office, few statesmen that will not betray their supporters, provided they imagine they, or their party, will benefit by the betrayal. Political expediency is transformed into the goddess of Reason whom we are called upon to worship. We live in an epoch of political and religious transition and in an atmosphere of sham. If anyone be so reckless as to speak the truth he is hounded down, in old-world manner, as a blasphemer against the gods, as an irreligious man, or at best is pointed to as a brutally candid thinker to thus tear aside the veil which hides the seething mass of unbelief beneath, for society hates those that try to unmask it. Many are now literally in search of a religion. If one could only obtain a good look from within at any particular organization included in what theologians style the Church Universal, flat heresy would probably be found common enough. Could we but take an Asmodean flight, and waiving aside all obstructions to the view, look down on this globe, what a world we would behold! Moral bonds are loosening, the age of faith in all things is shaken to its foundation. The most serious strain that any civilization has to encounter occurs in that stage in intellectual development in which religious restraints are beginning to be disregarded.

Whatever we may otherwise think of them, the men of old believed firmly in their creed. They could not behold a well without seeing there the abode of a beneficent being; a tree without its local god—

> "And to this day the peasant still
> With cautious fear avoids the ground,
> In each wild branch a spectre sees
> And trembles at each rising sound."

They regarded all nature as permeated through and through, with influence from on high. If we think we possess more wisdom, we have, in reality, quite as little knowledge of the workings of the will of the Great Ruler of The Unseen.

The upward course of paganism in Ireland has now been traced (as far as present day knowledge will allow) until the time when it was conquered by, and to a great extent absorbed into Christianity; its "childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day," but we should not, on that account, shrink from exploring the past, for it with its horrors will never return. Truth it is said, lies at the bottom of a well; it is difficult but not impossible to reach; its certain and eventual triumph over error will become a recognised fact in material as well as in moral matters. It is not too sanguine to predict that it will at length be reached, and will exhibit early human life in Ireland in a very different light from that in which it has been hitherto depicted. At the same time it is necessary to remember that archæological truth is purely relative, admits apparently of no finality, and must be surveyed in all lights and from all standpoints. There are but few lovers of truth that will not agree in this. Many a now acknowledged truth was once a struggling and much controverted theory: the basis of every science has been, at one time, considered a fundamental fallacy. One of the most far-reaching questions in the New Testament, "what is truth?"* received no answer, but the Roman Governor did not wait to listen to an answer had it been granted, or, paradoxically, as it may seem, may not silence be regarded as the answer. "We must never forget that man cannot ascertain absolute truth, and that the final result of human inquiry into the matter is, that we are incapable of perfect knowledge; that even if the truth be in our possession, we cannot be sure of it." Let us nevertheless try to establish the sway of what we consider to be the truth over the wild swirl of a seething archæological chaos: our sure ally is time; we should hold fast to nothing but that which is certain, and which has been verified by time, following St. Paul's advice, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

The late Professor Huxley states that early in life, he discovered "that one of the unpardonable sins, in the eyes of most people,

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* Pilate's question, *Quid est veritas?* is answered by the anagram *Est vir qui adest*, i.e. it is the man here present. Since the above was written, the following appeared in the *Contemporary Review* from the pen of Prof. Goldwin Smith:—"If we know anything of the law of the Universe, it is that our salvation lies in the single-minded pursuit of truth. Man will not rest in blank agnosticism; he is irresistibly impelled to inquiry into his origin and destiny. Our business now is to look for rational data, and most obviously in the intellectual and moral nature of man, with its consciousness, its aspirations, its sense of responsibility, and qualified freedom of will. These, however evolved, are not merely physical—though, however conditioned by matter, is not matter; if action is subject to causation, physical and moral causations are not the same. Nor is it easy to suppose that they are the accidental product of an unconscious Universe, or that they tell nothing beyond themselves."

is for a man to presume to go about unlabelled. The world regards such a person as the police do an unmuzzled dog, not under proper control." Now *si parva licet magnis componere*, the writer is also a vagrant and unlabelled animal, he can neither defend the chimera of the ancient glories of Ireland, nor, on the other hand, can he agree with those who paint the natives of Erin as any worse than their neighbours across the Channel. The writing of this work has been undertaken with reluctance, much in the spirit of the zealous Greek, who, after shattering the beautiful statues he had formerly regarded as his gods, gazes with regret at the wreck wrought by the blows of his iconoclastic hammer; for no spectacle can be more mournful than watching the dying agonies of an ancient and cherished belief, the belief in a former almost paradisiacal Ireland, which, in its day, has given consolation, in the greatest depths of despondency, to many generations of Irishmen, and there are also few acts which draw down greater opprobrium on a writer than the demolition of popular fallacies. It is difficult to replace them by well established facts, and the general reader prefers fallacious information to blank pages; for sensible beings who do not require fiction, but prefer positive concrete information are at present in a very small minority.

The text is, it is thought, untrammelled by shaky theories based on premature conclusions; there are certainly no pet cranks to uphold at any cost; there is no "axe to grind." Nothing has knowingly been extenuated, nothing has knowingly been set down in malice; throughout the attempt has been made to narrate, and it is hoped successfully, "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

Irregular Use of Maiden Surnames.

[*Note to p.* 40, *line* 22, *after the word* "kindred."]

"It is a common practice for mothers of children, when registering births, to sign the entry with their maiden surname. Cases have also frequently come under notice when, in death entries, deceased widows are registered under their maiden name instead of their married name, the maiden name having been resumed on the death of the husband.

"The Registrar of Tuam, No. 2, further reports that, in some cases in his district, the mother's maiden surname is used by the children instead of the father's, as—'John Keane,' real name 'John Dunne.' "—*Varieties and Synonyms of Surnames and Christian Names in Ireland.* Robert Matheson, p. 25.

The Unholy Round.

[*Note to p.* 57, *line* 4, *after the word* "sun."]

"One very ancient and persistent superstition had regard to the direction of movement either of persons or things. This direction should always be with the course of the sun. To move against the sun was improper and productive of evil consequences, and the name given to this direction of movement was *withershins.* Witches in their dances and other pranks always, it is said, went *withershins.* Mr. Simpson in his work, *Meeting the Sun*, says, 'The Llama monk whirls his praying cylinder in the way of the sun, and fears lest a stranger should get at it and turn it contrary, which would take from it all the virtue it had acquired. They also build piles of stone, and always pass them on one side, and return on the other, so as to make a circuit with the sun. Mahommedans make the circuit of the Caaba in the same way. The ancient dagobas of India and Ceylon were also traversed round in the same way, and the old Irish and Scotch custom is to make all movements *Desiul*, or sunwise, round houses and graves, and to turn their bodies in this way at the beginning and end of a journey for luck, as well as at weddings and other ceremonies.'

"To go *withershins* and to read prayers or the creed backwards were great evils, and pointed to connexion with the devil. The author of *Olrig Grange*, in an early poem, sketches this superstition very graphically :—

'Hech! sirs, but we had grand fun
Wi' the meikle black deil in the chair,
And the muckle Bible upside doon
A' ganging withershins roun' and roun',
And backwards saying the prayer
About the warlock's grave,
Withershins ganging roun';
And kimmer and carline had for licht
The fat o' a bairn they buried that nicht,
Unchristen'd beneath the moon.'

"If a tree or plant grew with a twist contrary to the direction of the sun's movement, that portion was considered to possess certain powers, which are referred to in the following verse of an old song:—

'I'll gar my ain Tammy gae doun to the Howe
And cut me a rock of the widdershins grow,
Of good rantree for to carry my tow,
And a spindle of the same for the twining o't.'

"Pennant refers to some other practices in Scotland in his day, that were no doubt survivals of ancient heathen worship. Such as, on certain occasions, kindling a fire, and the people joining hands and dancing three times round it south-ways, or according to the course of the sun. At baptisms and marriages they walked three times round the church sun-ways. The Highlanders, in going to bathe or drink in a consecrated fountain, approach it by going round the place from east to west on the south side. When the dead are laid in their grave, the grave is approached by going round in the same manner. The bride is conducted to the spouse in presence of the minister round the company in the same direction; indeed all public matters were done according to certain fixed ideas in relation to the sun, all pointing to a lingering ray of sun-worship."—*Folk-Lore*, by James Napier, F.R.S.E., pp. 133, 135.

Sir Walter Scott, in his tale of "The Antiquary," designates the locus of the bogus mining operations directed by the charlatan Dousterswivel as Glenwithershins, *i.e.* "the unlucky Glen."

Ceremonies at Tubbernalt Well.

[*Note to p.* 101, *line* 12, *after the word* "flowers."]

The following cure for diseases, as performed at the above-named well, is derived from information given by a person who has frequently made the prescribed rounds:—

Before coming to the well, the "Stations of the Cross" are recited by the postulant kneeling in front of the Altar. The postulant then picks up three stones, and approaches the "blessed well"; reverently he enters it, placing a foot into each side-wall of the well without touching the water (for if he does so, it invalidates the ceremony), stoops, and to do so his head must go partially into the recess on the opposite side of the wall.

He then turns round, without touching the water, looking up towards the sky, throws the first stone into the water in the name of the first person of the Trinity, the second for "the Son," and the third for "the Holy Ghost."

This done, he returns to the Altar; kneeling in front of it, he again performs the "Stations of the Cross," and the ceremony is concluded.

The above rites are generally performed by a substitute for a friend who is suffering from an infirmity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PAPERS AND WORKS

ON

Irish Pre-Christian Archæology and Folklore

WHICH CAME UNDER THE WRITER'S NOTICE.

⁂ *Arranged alphabetically by Subjects and Authors.*

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